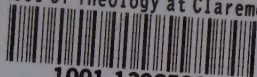


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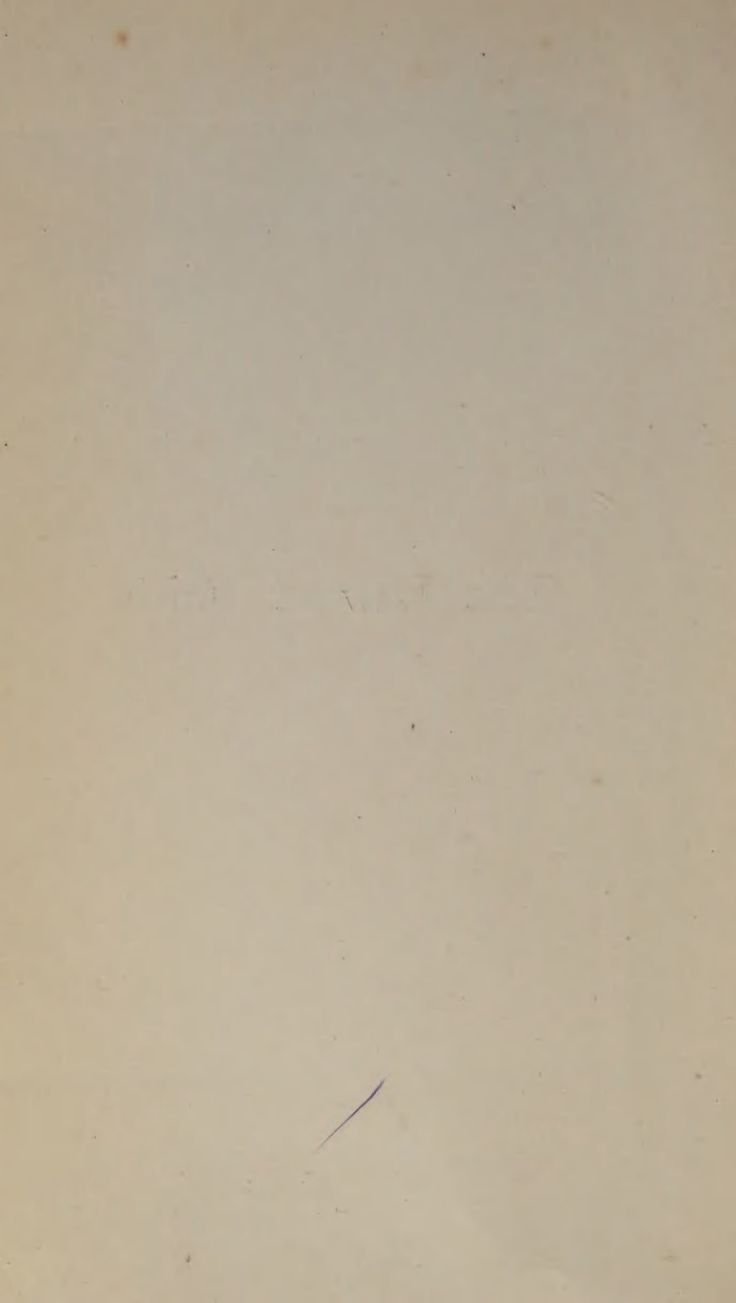
William Bright



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The Law of Faith



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The Law of Faith

By the

Rev. William Bright, D.D.

Canon of Christ Church, Oxford

Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History

London

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Clergy

The Law of Faith

I

Is Christianity a Law

Rom. iii. 27 (R. V.): "Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay, but by a law of faith."

Is Christianity in any sense a law? It was sometimes described in the edicts of early Christian emperors as the "sacred" or the "most venerable law:" and such a use of the term would be natural to the Roman official mind, which was wont to regard a religion as a system of prescribed acts or observances. But Christian theologians have also spoken of "the sacraments of the new law," as distinguished from the rites of the law of Moses; and one ancient commentator¹ takes occasion from the words of the prophet, "Out of Sion shall come forth a law," to remark that "this Evangelical law, having started from Jerusalem as from a fountain, has run through the whole world,

¹ Theodoret on Mic. iv. 2.

bringing its waters to those who approach it with faith." Some will be apt to pronounce at once that this language is self-contradictory,—that it involves a gross confusion of thought. The "Law," they will say, is diametrically opposed to the Gospel, opposed to the principle of faith in a Saviour, opposed to the very idea of grace, that is, of unmerited Divine favour and bounty. This is true in one sense : is it true absolutely ? Let us look to the teaching of the Apostle who has enlarged on this very subject in two great epistles, called forth in large measure by the attitude of Judaizing Christians : there is much to be learned from the diversity of language with which he treats of law from standpoints which are, indeed, distinct, but which will be found by no means incompatible.

No doubt, then, St. Paul does emphatically deny that obedience to the law, either in the form of Mosaic moral precepts, or as a general principle, that is, to moral law as such, can be a ground for justification, or in other words, can enable men to claim the entire approval of God. If they could be thus "justified," they would thereby be in a position to challenge acquittal before His judgment seat, to say to Him, "We have done all that Thou requirest," and to demand wages as due to work : on that ground, in St. Paul's phrase, they would have a "glorying,"—whereas for sinners any such glorying, or confidence, is out of the question. It is impossible to be too thoroughgoing in the assertion of this negative proposition,—funda-

mental, as we may call it in St. Paul's conception of Christianity, that "by *works* of law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight,"¹ that from such works,—to give the force of his phrase more literally,—no man can derive a right to be accounted righteous. There must be no mistake made, no loophole left for mistake, on a point thus cardinal. And St. Paul gives two reasons for his assertion : first, "through law comes full knowledge² of sin," a distinct recognition of its character as transgression. It is precisely the principle of law, forbidding men to do this or that, which brings out and forms their consciousness of the evil that is in them, and thus tends to condemn them in their own eyes: how then can it tend to their acquittal in God's sight? Thus St. Paul says that he would not have properly "understood sin but through law," and that "sin became exceeding sinful through the commandment."³ But there is a second reason,—a yet worse effect of law considered as a system of external commands. The will is provoked by its prohibitions into resistance : its imperative language, unaccompanied by any appeal to the heart, is felt to be exasperating : just because it says, "Thou shalt not," the "natural man" answers defiantly, "But I will." "We strive," said a heathen poet, "after what is forbidden ;" even a child will try how far it can safely go in disobedience to a

¹ Rom. iii. 20.

² Ἐπίγνωσις. Cf. Rom. i. 28 ; x. 2 ; Phil. i. 9, etc.

³ Rom. vii. 7, 13.

parent, for the mere pleasure of asserting independence; and thus St. Paul says, with his terrible clearness of insight, that the passions which lead to sins, thus stimulated, "work" in us, with the result of "producing fruit unto" moral "death:"¹ sin "takes occasion," finds a starting-point,² for fresh developments through the very command which vetoes it; and, as the Apostle says in the chapter associated with the most pathetic moments of English Christian life, finds its main "power," by a woful paradox, in "the law."³ Thus it is that "the law worketh wrath,"⁴ that "the letter killeth:"⁵ for the letter, in St. Paul's way of speaking, means moral law simply as commanding or prohibiting, standing, as it were, outside us instead of entering into us, and bearing down repressively on our will. Its aspect is necessarily austere, its tone is necessarily menacing: "Leave this and that undone, or take the consequences:" there is no persuasiveness in this magisterial address, but rather what Archbishop Trench has called an "irritating power,"⁶ the result of which is actually to increase the quantity and the intensity of sin.

Such was the experience which led St. Paul to say, "For my part, it was by means of law that I died to law, in order that I might live

¹ Rom. vii. 5.

² See Gifford on Rom. vii. 8, in "Speaker's Commentary."

³ 1 Cor. xv. 56.

⁴ Rom. iv. 15.

⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

⁶ Trench, "St. Augustine as an Interpreter of Scripture," p. 127.

unto God.”¹ He had “found that the very commandment which tended” properly “unto life,” which virtually promised life to those who obeyed it, was practically “unto death”;² and thus he saw clearly that acceptance with God was not attainable on the ground of legal obedience: that ground did not exist, for himself or for others; all were “under sin,”³ and deliverance from “its guilt and power” must be found elsewhere, by that self-committal to Christ, as “set forth to be a means of propitiation by His blood,”⁴ which he calls comprehensively faith,—a faith living and “operating through love.”

And it is that one word “love” which lights up for us the other side of St. Paul’s teaching about law. Love, he says, is a fulfilling of law.⁵ He is thinking immediately of love to one’s neighbour: but the saying is just as applicable to love for God. But, one may ask, “Are we then thrown back on that necessity of fulfilling the moral law which St. Paul had seemed so expressly to abrogate?” Well, does he not say as expressly as any one could say it, that he is “not annulling law” by the principle of faith, but is rather setting it up, “establishing” it,⁶ in its higher, broader, deeper, and more inclusive sense, as a manifestation of the mind and will of the Supreme Moral Being? Take law in its narrower sense, as merely so much of “Thou

¹ Gal. ii. 19.

² Rom. vii. 10.

³ Rom. iii. 9.

⁴ Rom. iii. 25.

⁵ Rom. xiii. 10.

⁶ Rom. iii. 31.

shalt" and "Thou shalt not," as simply mandatory and, as it were, external, and it will, doubtless, as man's nature goes, prove "weak through the flesh,"¹ and have the effect of multiplying sins. But take it with the element of an appeal to man's better nature, to his conscience as witnessing for God, to his religious affections as capable of responding to the voice of a Father by some return of trust and love, by some intelligent sympathy with the Divine intentions and some perception of the beauty of the Divine holiness, and then we find ourselves in a different atmosphere: we see that God's moral law is "holy, just, good, spiritual;"² it makes not for death, but for life: it is a "law of faith,"—there is now no sort of incongruity in that significant Apostolic combination,—it is "Christ's law,"³ it is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," an expression and presentation of the Spirit which giveth life, and by "walking in accordance to which those who are in Christ Jesus," whose lives are encompassed and animated by His presence, can "fulfil the righteous claim of the law."⁴

But here a word of caution may be needed. Such language is not to be pressed as if it involved such a perfection of righteousness as could constitute a ground of justification. That idea would, in a sense, "rebuild" what St. Paul had destroyed.⁵ Merit, properly speaking, is

¹ Rom. viii. 3.

² Rom. vii. 12, 14.

³ Gal. vi. 2.

⁴ Rom. viii. 2-4.

⁵ Gal. ii. 18.

unattainable for the most advanced Christian; he must, as St. Anselm puts it, "offer Christ's merits in place of any of his own."¹ Nor is it satisfactory to say that a Christian's goodness or righteousness, though imperfect as belonging to himself, is perfect as proceeding from the Spirit whose grace works in him.² What is in question is the use which he makes of grace, the extent to which he "corresponds with it": and even full correspondence in one instance would not make a perfect obedience, when set against instances of failure or of fall. In short, the fulfilment of which St. Paul speaks in that exultant opening of the eighth chapter to the Romans must be taken in a sense less than absolute; and it is well to remember that "there is no greater non-natural interpretation than the forced and rigid avoidance of qualified interpretation,"³ when the context and the general thought of the writer suggest the qualification to be understood: and this is certainly the case in the passage before us, where St. Paul goes on to speak of the persons in question, as in a condition opposite to that of "enmity against

¹ St. Anselm's "Admonition to the Dying."

² Newman, "Serm." v. 157. The mistake involved in such language arises out of the erroneous preconception that justification must somehow depend upon a righteousness consisting in a progressive course of Christian obedience, whereas it depends on "faith" as involving self-surrender, as inseparable from love, as containing the potency of future obedience, while resting its hope of Divine acquittal on the Passion and Mediation of Christ alone.

³ Mozley, "Lectures," etc., p. 196.

God," as ordering their lives "in accordance with the spirit," and not with "the flesh" in the general sense of the lower element in human nature.

Thus, whereas in one sense St. Paul condemns those who lay stress on law as connected with justification, in another he enshrines the idea of law within the very sanctuary of Gospel truth. To law, as purely restrictive, obedience may be paid out of fear, but with an element of grudging or reluctance, which excludes "real confidence, true and childlike obedience,"¹ and is apt to construe requirements as strictly as a penal statute. But when law is written on the heart, when it is felt to represent the Divine character, then it is "spiritual" indeed, and tends to "life," for in shaping conduct by it men consciously draw near to that Holy One whom they know to be altogether lovable; they know "the thoughts that He thinks concerning them," and therefore they can read His commands not with a cold and narrow literalism, but with a loyal eagerness to drink in their whole spirit; so that here St. Paul meets St. James on the platform of law, deepened and expanded, transfigured and endeared, a "royal and perfect law of liberty."²

But it is essential to remember that the obligatory character which is essential to law is retained while law itself is spiritualized. In fact, we could not do without it. Law has been defined as "a rule and measure of moral

¹ Cf. Döllinger, "First Age of the Church," E. T., p. 180.

² James i. 25; ii. 8.

actions, so that actions become right through conformity to it : ”¹ not, of course, an arbitrary rule, but one which could not be other than it is, because it expresses the righteousness of its Author. And some such “rule or measure” is necessary for moral creatures: a life unregulated is as such a life abnormal. Shakespeare makes one of his wise characters ascribe existing evils to the neglect of “proportion, season, form,” in a word, of “order.”² Wordsworth, in one of his noblest poems, contemplates the possibility that those “who ask not if the eye of Duty is upon them may fail through confidence misplaced,” and addresses her as a “stern lawgiver that yet wears the Godhead’s most benignant grace,” and through whom “the most ancient heavens are fresh and strong : ”³ and Hooker speaks of angels as living in the “perfection of obedience unto that law which the Highest, whose face they behold, hath imposed upon them.”⁴ Service does not cease to be service when it becomes a perfect freedom. St. Paul uses a strong word to express it when he says, “We were discharged from the law by dying to that by which we were (formerly) held fast”—to what result? That we should be freed from all service? No—“that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter : ”⁵ and St. John introduces into his picture of future blessedness the prediction that God’s servants “shall serve

¹ Suarez. ² “Troilus and Cressida,” i. 3.

³ “Ode to Duty.”

⁴ “Eccl. Pol.,” i. 4. 1.

⁵ Rom. vii. 6 (δουλεύειν).

Him" while they see His face, and while they reign for ever and ever.¹ To be "under law" in this sense is part of our creaturely dependence, therefore of our creaturely happiness: and those who dislike to acknowledge it as such, who "call God Father, not King," forget that if He is a Father, He must have "His honour,"² and that if He is God, He must be King; there can be no "Divine Fatherhood" without sovereignty, no absolute righteousness without the majesty of a Judge. Language which evades the fact of law in practical religion will deprive religion of awe, and therein of reality and efficacy: and no amount of disclaimers of Antinomianism, as "of course" fatal to Christian morality, will shut out the Antinomian principle from habits of thought which deny that the moral law, in its complete and Christian form, is literally binding on the Christian conscience.

There is significance, and there is helpfulness, in the words which, in our liturgy, precede and follow the recitation of the Decalogue. We begin by asking Him to whom all hearts are open for that inspiration of His Spirit which can "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts," and enable us "perfectly to love Him:" and we end by developing the repeated petition that the Lord would incline our hearts to keep this or that law into a prayer for the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prediction as to the New Covenant—"Write all these Thy laws in our hearts!"

¹ Rev. xxii. 4, 5.

² Mal. i. 6.

Well for us if we can make this prayer, in the whole breadth of its scope, our own. Well for us if, while we do so, we strive with definite purpose, in all the details of daily conduct, to "establish the law of faith and of the Spirit," and never dream that we can dispense with the obligation of "rendering to God a service which shall please Him with that reverence" which is inseparable from worship, that "godly fear"¹ which is the companion of godly love.

¹ Heb. xii. 26. Compare the Litany; "A heart to love *and* dread Thee" (Christ). See below, p. 93.

II

Grace

2 Cor. xii. 9 (R. V.): "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

IF there is one feature of the petitions in the Prayer-book which is peculiarly distinctive and characteristic, it is the frequent iteration of the little word "grace," or of phrases which, taken in connexion with that word, are at once understood to embody its meaning. Over and over again, in the daily offices, the litany, the office of Holy Communion, in occasional offices, in the Ordinal, in the collects for Sundays and Holy days, the prayer goes up, "Lord, give us Thy grace"—grace for this or that purpose; grace, for instance, "to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light;" grace in the form of "help" or "assistance," or of "strength" or "power"; grace to "amend our lives"; grace to "receive thankfully the inestimable" gift of a Redeemer, and to endeavour to walk in the steps of His holy life; grace to "withstand temptation"; grace to "use God's manifold gifts to His honour;" grace "to follow

His saints in all virtuous and godly living ; ” yet again, “ increase of grace,” or a due “ measure ” of grace for the attainment of God’s promises ; and all these “ graces ” as flowing from the Holy Spirit, even as the sevenfold blessing besought and conferred in Confirmation is associated with the “ strengthening ” presence of the Comforter. No doubt this careful insistence on the necessity and reality of grace is due to the vast influence of the theology of St. Augustine on the mind of Western Christendom ; for the idea is much less familiar to the thought and the worship of Eastern Churches. Now the question, what does grace mean ? of course refers us to its sense in the New Testament. The word originally means favour or goodwill, kindness of feeling, a benevolent state of mind ; but such a quality in man ought not, as St. James reminds us with an incisiveness which is almost humorous, to expend itself in saying, “ Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled : ”¹ and St. Paul illustrates this duty of passing from mere feeling into action which costs something, by applying this word grace or favour to a fund in aid of the distressed Christians in Palestine.² The brotherly goodwill of those who, at his bidding, contributed even out of their “ deep poverty ” for the relief of foreign brethren worse off than themselves, thus took a concrete form ; and the generous spontaneity of such a contribution might further remind us of that well-known use of the same term which emphasizes the freeness

¹ James ii. 16.

² 2 Cor. viii. 4 ff.

of Christian salvation¹ as an infinite bounty which man cannot claim as a debt.

But ~~Grace, in the special sense which Christian theology has derived from Pauline teaching,~~ has been excellently defined as "God's love in action," or otherwise as a "gift of spiritual strength." Man's kindness too often evaporates in feeling, or in a few sympathetic words. With God to will is to act, and so His goodwill must needs energize in bounty: even as in our text, when St. Paul besought Christ that a harassing bodily ailment might pass from him, the answer came, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My power is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly, therefore," the Apostle continues, "will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest"—or literally, "may spread itself like a tent—upon" or over me. Here, then, grace comes in the form of an increase of strength: and in other contexts of the same Epistle, we find grace spoken of as a form of succour,² or as an "abundant" supply productive of an abundance of energy in "every good work."³ In the former of these two passages, just before quoting from Isaiah, "In the day of salvation did I succour thee," the Apostle entreats the Corinthian Christians "not to receive the grace of God in vain." Here grace is something definitely given and received: it can be received either profitably or "in vain"; but in either case it is a positive gift, not merely

¹ Eph. ii. 8, etc. ² 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. ³ 2 Cor. ix. 8.

inoperative favour, that is, not such goodwill as does not go forth into action. It is more intimate and penetrating than any outward appeal, any exhortation or instruction, or even than the impressiveness of Christ's supreme example: attempts were made at one time to reduce it to this kind of assistance, but it was easy to show ¹ that such a conception was quite inadequate, that it wholly failed to do justice to the Pauline use of the word, or to other passages of Scripture which affirmed our dependence on God's help for all right action. It has been compared to a force, or, as St. Paul says, it is a "power working within us:" ² but whatever terms we use to describe it, we must constantly bear in mind that it is essentially a presence of a personal Holy Spirit, drawing near to man, and if welcomed, producing goodness in man.

Let us see how it works. Let us suppose a soul to be cold towards things sacred, languid and inert in regard to religious duties, in short, to be drifting away into indifference or alienation. Grace may be sent to arouse it, to stir up the will and enkindle the affections into accordance with the mind and purpose of God. This movement takes place; the spell of torpor is at least for the moment broken; the soul receives a new inspiration; a sense of its own value, of its own capacities, of its own responsibilities, revives: and at the same time a fresh infusion of strength enables it to answer the

¹ St. Aug., "de Grat. Chr.," 45, etc. ² Eph. iii. 20.

call thus made upon it, to say, "Speak, Lord, here I am."¹ This is the operation of grace as "prevenient," as "putting into the mind good desires," in the language of our Easter collect. The soul gets a new start, which it *may* respond to by the new vigour which grace offers, but which it *may*, on the other hand, ignore and neglect to profit by. Only too easy is it to turn on the other side and go to sleep again, and thereby to "receive grace in vain" by not accepting it; or even to resent the Divine visit as disturbing and intrusive, and thwart the Divine intention by perversity. But let the will rather allow itself to be rectified; let the heart be softened by that pleading and winning tenderness which "draws us with cords of a man, with bands of love;"² let the whole being cry out, "Yes, my God, I will give myself to Thee;—take possession of me, make something of me:"—and then grace will sustain the impulse imparted, will follow up its prevenient action with that "continual help which can bring to good effect" the purposes called forth by its first appeal. In this sense, as St. Paul expresses it in a brief sentence which well-nigh gathers up his whole doctrine on the subject, "it is God that worketh in us both the willing and the doing, for His good pleasure,"³ that is,

¹ "Grace is a gift altering and raising the powers by which man chooses and wills and acts," etc.—Church, "Cath. and Univ. Sermon," p. 170. Cp. Paget, "Faculties and Difficulties," etc., p. 193. See below, p. 73.

² Hosea xi. 4.

³ Phil. ii. 13.

in order to the full accomplishment of His benignant and fatherly goodwill.

Is grace simply a result of the Incarnation? We may surely apply the name of grace, in a sense less plenary but real, to the working of the Holy Spirit on the nobler souls of heathendom, and yet more on those true Israelites who could pray that hearts might be "prepared" for, or "inclined" to, the service of the God of their fathers,¹ or in the fervent words of Psalmists, "Create in me a clean heart," "unite my heart," that is, give it singleness of aim, "to fear Thy name" or "to love Thee." But when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, He came as "full of grace," and "out of His fulness," says the fourth Evangelist, "did all we receive, and grace for grace," the right use of one grace being rewarded with more grace and yet more.² In the sacred humanity of Jesus grace dwelt without measure, as the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. Theologians have applied the term to those special endowments which His human nature received by its union with His Divine personality:³ but grace, in its more ordinary sense of a restorative and purifying influence, could not be needed by Him as Man, for in Him was no sin, nor even the possibility of actual rebellion; but it was stored up in His manhood, to be thence diffused to all who should be incorporated into Him.

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 18; 1 Kings viii. 58.

² Cf. Bp. Westcott on St. John i. 16.

³ Cf. Hooker, "E. P.," v. 54.

Diffused—and how? Principally through those sacramental “means whereby,” as we were taught in childhood, “we receive” that grace of which they are outward symbols. A sacrament, combining the visible with the invisible, is thus far in keeping with the Incarnation itself, and is therefore a fitting organ for conveying the benefits of that transcendent mystery; let us rather say, for bringing home to us the living personal touch of the Incarnate Himself, on whom all Christian souls depend as on “a quickening spirit,” a fountain of cleansing and renewal. Where the Incarnation is really believed, sacramental efficacy should be no hard saying; where sacraments are duly appreciated, belief in the Incarnation is never lost.

But although these divinely provided ordinances are the principal, and, in a signal sense, the covenanted channels of grace, it comes to us, by God’s mercy, through a multitude of subordinate occasions, which, if heedfully “redeemed” or secured, will gradually form an atmosphere of spiritual healthiness, amid which we can imbibe grace, as we need it, at every turn of our life’s journey.

Are there any limitations to this beneficent activity of grace? For one thing, we may be quite sure that not a single soul is excluded from it by any supposed arbitrary decree, independently of its own disposition or conduct. In the noble words of an old Western Council, “We believe, according to the Catholic faith,

that all the baptized, having received grace through baptism, are able, by the help of Christ, to fulfil the conditions of salvation.”¹ Christian grace is not only accessible to all Christians, it is urged on their acceptance by the importunities of Divine love : the distinction once drawn between sufficient grace and grace as effective is unreal and sophistical ; grace that suffices, on God’s part, is never lacking, but it rests with us, by opening our souls to it, and consistently living up to it, to make it effective. Yet there are limitations which it concerns us much to take account of. As we have seen, it is not irresistible. Again, it does not act mechanically ; it will not “crown us without our stir ;” it requires in us the formation of those habits which tend to preserve it. Thirdly, it will not destroy the sinful bias or evil tendency which even in the baptized survives as a deposit of the Fall, although counteracted by the implanted principle of good. Lastly,—and this is “a most grave consideration,”—we can presume upon grace, can neglect to keep our lamps full of oil, can quench the fire which the Spirit of grace has kindled, and pass out at last into the darkness of obduracy. For those who are living in grace, the humility which means vigilance is most needful.

The practical conclusion of the matter is surely this : Let us believe that we do very seriously need grace, that it is to be had for the asking,—nay, that to ask for it sincerely is a

¹ Second Council of Orange.

sign of having it already in part,—and that our business is to seek for it continually, and to cherish it by a constant warfare with sin, even as it is most assuredly impaired and diminished by each compliance with the promptings of evil. Let no day pass over us without prayer for more grace to Him who, as St. James tells us, is ever ready to “give more.” The pith of many collects may be condensed into the last words of a simple and deeply pathetic hymn, intended for use after Communion :

“Multiply our graces,
Chiefly love and fear;
And, dear Lord, the chiefest,
Grace to persevere.”¹

¹ The readers of Pascal’s “Second Letter” are amused by the exposure of the Dominicans’ disingenuous admission of “sufficient grace” as given to all. More striking is the success of “Augustinian” traditions in making “efficacious” a mere synonym for “determinative.”

III

The Need of a Realizing Faith

St. John xii. 21 : "Sir, we would see Jesus."

THERE is a singular and pathetic interest in the request made by these "Greeks," who, like Cornelius in after-days, had become proselytes or converts to the faith and worship of the God of Israel. They were, we may be sure, men of a very different type of character from that which, as our Lord says in the severest chapter of the Gospels, was too often exhibited by proselytes of the Pharisees.¹ These men were not "children of hell," but "sons of peace": they had escaped from the moral defilement and religious darkness of Paganism; they had, it has been vividly said, "groped their way to the porch of Judaism just as the first streaks of the" great "Light were falling within upon its altar."² They must have heard of, perhaps they had even witnessed, the recent Triumphal Entry. This Jesus the Prophet, this King of Israel coming in the name of the Lord, might He

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 15.

² Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus," ii. 390.

not teach them something more? would He not be likely to do them some good? What if they could get a word or two with Him? They apply to one of His disciples, who has a Greek name: "Sir," they say courteously, and with a touching simplicity, "we wish to see Jesus." Philip (as a remark of his was ere long to show,) ¹ is less intimate with the Master than some who belong to an interior circle: he goes to Andrew, who, as this fourth Gospel has already told us, had preceded his own brother, Simon Peter, in personal knowledge of Him whom, in his hearing, the Baptist had called "the Lamb of God,"—whom he himself undoubtingly described as "the Messiah." ² He goes with Philip to ascertain the pleasure of their Lord; they report the wish of the "Greeks." And here we may note a little token of genuineness in the narrative. An inventor of a Life of Jesus would have been sure to tell his readers how the introduction was actually made, what Jesus said to the Greeks, and how He impressed them. The Evangelist leaves us to infer this, and occupies himself simply with the significant warning contained in words which the Lord shortly uttered, to the effect that He must needs pass to His "glory" through a very dark entrance, and that His servants also must follow Him in that path; that death to this present life was the condition of "living," in the true and "fruitful" sense of the term. ³ We may infer, I

¹ St. John xiv. 8.

² St. John i. 41.

³ St. John xii. 23 ff.

say, that these sayings were meant specially for the "Greeks": and it has often been observed¹ that, in so far as they retained their old national ideals, their first experience of the new Teacher must have brought with it that kind of shock which men feel when confronted, for the first time, with the austerer side of things,—that the Greek view of life, as precious for its opportunities of self-development, and desirable in so far as it met the craving for beauty, freedom, strength, and joyous exuberant activity,² would be sternly corrected by the announcement, or even by the intimation, that the "way of light" was a "way of the cross," and that discipleship meant some form or other of self-sacrifice.

But leaving this point on one side, let us see what we can learn from the request itself, rather than from the implicit answer. "Sir, we would see Jesus." Is the wish, thus put into form, one with which we can sympathize? Do we know anything of the state of mind out of which it would naturally emerge? And if so, can we see how it may be gratified,—how belief may expand into something like spiritual vision? One cannot, surely, be mistaken in thinking that some among us,—church-goers, and per-

¹ *E.g.* Bp. Ellicott, "Huls. Lect.," p. 317.

² "To the Greek, the blessed life was a correspondence with environment, a balanced answer to the claims of bright surroundings. It was a worship of the beautiful. . . . As a people, the Greeks strove to make life desirable by trusting to their perception of what was artistic."—Pullan, "Lectures on Religion," p. 4.

haps periodical communicants,—would fain “see” the Lord Jesus, in this sense, as hitherto they have not seen Him. A person may say to himself,—“I have heard and read, times without number, of the deep ‘peace,’ or even the ‘joy,’ that comes with really ‘believing.’”¹ The letters of the apostles, the writings of typical Christians in all ages, the memoirs of pure and beautiful souls of our own race, and within our own time,—all testify to a certain effect on thought and affection and conduct, and on the general estimate of life, produced by devotion to Jesus as Master and Saviour. Evidence abundantly shows that ‘the image or idea of Him,’ somehow or other imprinted on the minds of His subjects individually,² has made life, to them, unspeakably ‘worth living’; it has given a new zest to all worthy pursuits and activities; it has lighted up the moral and spiritual world; it has brought God truly near; it has kindled a spiritual ‘enthusiasm of humanity’; it has been a motive force for well-doing,³ a principle of resistance to temptation, a support and consolation in trouble, a staff to lean upon in the valley of the shadow of death. Even one who deems Christianity a mere up-growth of pious fancies must admit that what he calls its tender illusions have, as a matter of fact, done all this for thousands of thousands

¹ Rom. xv. 13.

² Newman, “Grammar of Assent,” p. 451.

³ Cp. Shairp’s “Studies in Poetry and Philosophy,” p. 374 ff.

of men and women of like feelings with himself. Faith has, in this sense, overcome the world,¹ for them. Yes, I see all this; and yet,"—the person whom we are supposing confesses,—"yet somehow I cannot get hold of it, assimilate it, as a promise. I do not question any point of the Christian creed; my difficulty does not lie in contending with sceptical doubts, but in realizing what I accept, what, in the sense of credence, I believe. To me there is such a gap between the central Figure of the Gospels, with the ideal of life that He embodies, and that His disciples, in all the ages, have embraced with such glad fervour, and this everyday life of mine, with its very different interests, so vividly present, so richly attractive, so absorbing as to crowd the whole scene. That Figure has fallen, for me, into the background:—

‘ Comes faint and far Thy voice
From vales of Galilee:
Thy vision fades in ancient shades:
How should we follow Thee?’²

How can I regain this freshness and vigour of faith? I wish, I really do wish, to appropriate the experience which has made some lives, that I well know of, so clean and so radiant, so consistent and so happy; but how—but how?" . . . Perhaps he consults some elder Christian who seems to have got the secret, to whom the "vision" is "open," and prefers the piteous

¹ I John v. 4.

² Palgrave, "Amenophis and other Poems," p. 24.

wistful entreaty, "Sir, I would see Jesus,—can you help me, can you bring me to speech of Him? What shall I do? Only tell me."

The petition was not in vain,—by no means in vain,—on that Tuesday in the first Holy Week. Will it, think you, be in vain now, after all these Christian ages? Not while Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, and holds all authority in heaven and in earth.¹

(a) But first let the answer exclude a wrong method, which some, in their inexperience, have adopted, with mere disappointment for result. A person who was competent to advise on such a subject (and we must all have known, at least, one or two such advisers) would begin by saying, "There is one thing which you must *not* do. Do not attempt to work yourself up into what you think a state of warm devotional feeling. Artificial emotion is shallow and powerless, because it *is* artificial, and therefore forced. Even when emotion springs up spontaneously, it is not to be relied upon: it rises and sinks, comes and goes: if you do not instantly act upon it, it leaves you colder and weaker than it found you."² No, to 'get up' feeling is distinctly not the right way for attaining a sight of Jesus."

(b) But next, and positively, there is a primary indispensable condition. He who would "see"

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

² See Newman, "Serm.," i. 116, 185 ff. And his "Letters," ii. 308: "The more she indulges her feelings now, the greater reverse perhaps is in store."

the Lord must examine himself very definitely : “Am I cherishing any sin? Am I playing any tricks with my conscience? Is there in some dark corner of my soul, hidden away, often, perhaps, out of my own sight, something which will have the effect that Achan’s carefully secreted spoils from Jericho were found to have had on the whole cause of Israel?”¹ If there is, out it must come : there must be no attempt to compromise about it ; there is no room within the house of the spirit for Jesus and “the accursed thing” that ought never to have been harboured. Can we, after thus scrutinizing ourselves,—(let us say “we,” for surely in one way or other this concerns all of us),—can we say honestly, “I desire to be quite true to Jesus Christ ; to have the single eye which makes the whole being luminous,² to keep no terms with any sin, and especially with that one, whatever it may be, which most easily besets,³ most seriously impedes me”? Happy are those who can say this : He will help them to say it with more and more of what the Apostle calls godly sincerity.⁴ The ground is largely cleared ; the next steps onward are quite visible : let us briefly define them.

A Philip of our day, or an Andrew, might say to him who would fain see Jesus,—“Suppose you take up the Gospels again, and study them with the express purpose of ‘realizing’ Christ

¹ Josh. vii. 21.

² St. Matt. vi. 22.

³ Heb. xii. 1. “What are we placed here for, except to overcome the besetting sin, whatever it be in our own case?”
—Newman’s “Letters,” i. 260.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 12.

in them. The Christ, the Jesus, the Emmanuel of the Evangelists—is not He, is not His character, as there evidently set forth, the most persuasive of all evidences for Christianity? Look at it again, that character of which it has been said, that in it “the qualities which attract reverence, and the qualities which attract love, are combined and interfused in their perfection.” “What other notion than this,” the same writer went on to ask, “can philosophy form of Divinity manifest on earth?” Contemplate again this august and pathetic Figure; give it time to impress you, to tell upon your mind and heart: it will “form and deepen in you an image of Him”¹ which will abide, if you treat it fairly: the Christ of Peter and John, of Philip and Andrew, of the penitent woman and the penitent robber, will be for you also a living Christ. As Thomas, after all his doubting, could hail his Master as Lord and God, so you will be able to say, “I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee”² in the records of that all-holy human life, through which there shone out the moral ‘glory of the Only-begotten of the Father.’³ ‘Lord, to whom else should I go?’⁴

And then He will show Himself yet further in the faithful use of the means of grace, which are so many ordained “points of contact”⁵ with Himself as the Life-giver. If we would see

¹ Mozley, “Essays,” ii. 128.

² Job xlii. 5.

³ St. John i. 14.

⁴ St. John vi. 68.

⁵ Liddon, “Advent Serm.,” i. 241.

Him most clearly and most profitably, we must remember how, on the first Easter-day, "He was known by two disciples in the breaking of the bread."¹ The right reception of Gospel ordinances is a spiritual Epiphany of Him in whom the Gospel is gathered up: in the greatest of sacraments, above all, He brings us actually into contact with His Incarnation; we appropriate it, with its effects; we take it home, and live, so to speak, in its atmosphere.

And so, in the power of Sacramental grace, we shall set ourselves once more to the daily work of our calling, as the appointed area of a continuous service, to be fulfilled "as to the Lord," and "in Christ." Let us offer up to Him,—to Him as personally present with us, as personally interested in us,—each day, and all its occupations, yes, and all its relaxations—as it begins,—and beg Him to let us somehow "see" Him throughout it. Let us say to Him, "My Lord, I give Thee my heart:² cleanse me, rectify me, take possession of me: I put myself into Thy hands: let Thy grace work freely on me. . . ." Is He likely, think you, to refuse that request? Could He possibly refuse it, and *be* Jesus? We Christians know better. His covenant He will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips: He has said that if we try to obey Him, He will reckon it as love, and that to those who love Him He will manifest Himself.³ He is not

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 35.

² Prov. xxiii. 26.

³ St. John xiv. 21.

merely a Sunday Christ, but a week-day Christ : "the trivial round, the common task," the home-routine, the kindly social pleasure, are they not familiar to Him who once learned a trade and worked in a shop, who went about in fishermen's boats, who sat at table as a guest, and who, on His heavenly throne, remembers Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum, as He remembers Gethsemane and Calvary? Let us trust Him with the hallowing of our ordinary "secular" interests; let us try to shape each day's life so as best to please Him. "Would our Lord like me to say this or to read that? Would He sanction this train of thought or of fancy? When I go with that companion, could I imagine His drawing near and walking beside us?"¹ This habitual "looking up to Jesus,"² this repeated reference to His will and pleasure—does it seem to us likely to be oppressive, restrictive, burdensome? Let us only try it, and judge for ourselves: it will turn out to be a source of peace and comfort indescribable. At the end of a day so spent,—yet more, at the close of a week so spent,—if not without some failures, yet with a permanent loyal and loving purpose, the Christian soul will be able to enter into what Apostles once said to him who had not been with them when Jesus came—"We have seen the Lord; we cannot be mistaken; it was verily He Himself."

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 15.

² Heb. xii. 2.

IV

Christianity a Doctrinal Religion

Eph. iv. 5: "One faith."

WHAT is the place and purpose of doctrine in the Christian scheme of thought and of life? The question is momentous in itself, and of late years has been growing in urgency. Long ago, a member of the Theological Professoriate in Oxford University,—one, I may add, of whom it could truly be said that he "being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time,"—observed that "in a thousand ways a state of opinion had grown up which was singularly unfavourable to the reception of doctrinal or theological truth," that "undefined ideas were gravitating towards the belief that there was such a thing possible as undogmatic Christianity."¹ What Dr. Shirley said then may be said now with greater emphasis and on fuller evidence: on all sides, in addresses, in popular periodicals, "religion" is set in opposition to "theology"; doctrinal formularies, or even creeds, are dis-

¹ Professor W. W. Shirley, "Elijah and other Sermons."

paraged under the invidious name of "dogma." A free use of such nicknames has a singular power of fostering and perpetuating a prejudice. "Obsolete, over-technical, formal, cramping, arid, unspiritual," all these epithets are discharged like pellets at doctrine as stated or formulated: and we know how, in discussions about education, it is assumed that to teach children any definite articles of belief is "to case up young minds in a plaster of sectarian dogmatism, with the purpose of keeping them under sacerdotal sway."

Now, of course, it is to be granted that the word dogma has for many persons a needlessly harsh and repellent sound: it seems to suggest an imperious demand that this or that proposition shall be accepted, under penalties represented, at any rate, as tremendous; and it is quite true that in the New Testament it is not applied to doctrines, but to decrees or requirements. It is not less certain that ecclesiastics or theologians have often "dogmatized" to a mischievous excess, have gone far beyond their "guiding," have erected mere opinions into articles of faith, have propounded as truth what was not only dubious but untrue. But the proverb about use being not annulled by abuse is pertinent in this as in other cases: and the question, so far as we need now concern ourselves with it, is primarily a question of principle. Is dogma, in the sense of the affirmation of doctrine—some amount of doctrine,—doctrine of some kind or other,—

a necessary and therefore a permanent element in the religion of Jesus Christ our Lord?

And yet it is strange that such a question should have to be asked, when once the belief in God is assumed to start with. In the words of the eloquent Primate of All Ireland: "Dogma is the general statement of a positive religious truth in the language of Holy Scripture, or in language duly authorized as equivalent to it. To say that religion has no dogma is to say that nothing is really known about it: he who pronounces the word 'God' puts himself out of court for denouncing dogma, for the word conveys the dogma of dogmas."¹ Or in the words of Cardinal Newman, which all serious theists ought to accept: "The word 'God' is a theology in itself."² So that, if we believe in God as a living Being with what we call personality and character, our belief must be able to express itself, and the form of its expression must be capable of being taught and learned. And if we advance from mere theism to a belief which, for theists, must be antecedently probable, that such a God can reveal Himself in ways which, for want of a more exact term, we call supernatural, then we see how inevitable it was that the Hebrew religion should take its stand on a great article of faith, which Israelites to this very day are taught to recite at the most solemn moments of earthly life: "The Lord our God is one Lord." The religion, then, of

¹ Archbishop Alexander, "Primary Convictions," p. 196.

² "Discourses on University Education," p. 45, ed. 1.

the Old Testament was distinctly dogmatic : and our Divine Teacher, who came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, assumed—having no need to publish or justify—this same principle as characteristic of the gospel of His new kingdom. Will it be said that His great sermon, as we read it in the first Gospel, the sermon, as we call it, “on the Mount,” is “purely ethical,” and keeps utterly clear of “theological metaphysics”? One might wonder whether those who so describe it have ever fairly read it through. They “seem,” in the words of a great Congregationalist writer, “never to have read, or to have wholly forgotten, a large part of that very sermon for whose ethical teaching they express so much enthusiasm. . . . Who is it that in that sermon places His own authority side by side with the authority of God?”¹ A doctrinal proposition is needed to explain the tone which Jesus takes in the well-known contexts here referred to. We want to know who He personally is, and by what right He adopts this language of unmeasured self-assertion? Again, it would be altogether arbitrary to rest on this one discourse, and ignore, for instance, the form of Christian baptism which the same Gospel represents the Risen Lord as prescribing for His Church’s use throughout the future : and if we treat the fourth Gospel as trustworthy in its account of His interior teaching, we know that He expressly pointed onward

¹ Dale, “Christian Doctrine,” p. 165. So *ib.*, p. 110 : “In discovering His authority we discover that He is divine.”

to a communication of further truth by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and in that light we read the Apostolic Epistles, which not only presuppose, throughout, theological revelations as to the person of Christ, the redemption or mediatorial work, the energy of grace, the efficacy of ordinances, the conditions of union with Him and of access through Him to the Father, but occasionally give summaries of truths to be believed, expansions, as it were, of "Thou art the Son of the living God," and anticipations of "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father," and so on. If we think of it, we shall see that it was impossible for Apostles to write as they did without suggesting the question, "Who is this Father, this Son of God, this Holy Spirit? why is Jesus Christ called 'our great God' and 'the Lord of glory'? why are we to take Him for our Lord? what is meant by His title of Saviour? what is the effect, so often insisted on, of His death, or how did His coming in flesh involve the manifestation of a Word who was from the beginning?" It was impossible for them, it is equally impossible for us, to evade the cardinal inquiry, "Whom say ye that I am?" In fact, if men attempt to detach "the original Christianity" from its "envelope" of theology or dogma, the task before them is that of reconstructing the New Testament. And those who, as it has been tersely expressed, are trying now to substitute for Christian doctrine "a sweetened and enlightened vagueness," and assume that it does

not really matter which view we take of Christ's intrinsic personality, have already parted with the conceptions involved in a Christianity which can overcome the world, and abandoned the standing ground of St. Paul or of St. John, as well as that of St. Athanasius. Dogma, in forms which bring out and do not misrepresent or pervert the meaning of Scripture, protects and consolidates belief : for it is the language by which Christianity asserts that it is not a mere "influence," but has an "unyielding kernel," a "sturdy foundation" in "the personality of the Lord Jesus, with its paramount claims."¹

But is this all that must be said as to the necessity of doctrine? We are told that our creed must be "moralized," must prove its connexion with the needs and capacities of mankind. By all means : it is ready to face that test. We do not accept it by an act of such "reason" as is non-moral or unspiritual, but by the "reason" of a personality which knows itself to be both rational, moral, and spiritual.² Hence it is that we recognize in justifying faith an activity of the whole person, as thinking, willing, and loving. And here comes in the reply to those who imagine that they are pleading in the interest of Christian morality, when they reduce Christian doctrine to a minimum; that when relieved of the "hard crust" of "dogmatic accretions," it will enter on a new career of healthful influence. But this is a most superficial view.

¹ H. S. Holland, "Pleas and Claims for Christ," p. 135.

² Moberly, "Reason and Religion," p. 37.

"The whole system of Christian ethics is an inseparable part of Christian theology."¹ Is this saying paradoxical or over-bold? It will not seem so if we look at "Christian ethics" as they appear in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. In our text He implicitly says that we shall be "sanctified" when we are "in" the atmosphere of that truth which is embodied in His Person: and so St. Paul assures the Ephesian clergy that the "word" of Divine "grace is able to build them up" in character, "and to give them their inheritance among all those who have been sanctified,"² even as elsewhere he accounts for the activity of "unreasonable and evil men" by quietly observing that "all men have not the faith."³ We all know how systematically he uses doctrine as the basis of practical exhortation: for instance, how he enforces purity by the assertion of a Divine indwelling which hallows the very bodies of Christians. And look at the one idea of grace; observe the conditions and the instrumentalities of grace: see how grace witnesses for responsibility, yet holds out the strengthening hand of hope; how it keeps the soul both active

¹ The Duke of Argyll, "The Philosophy of Belief," p. 384. Cf. Dale, "Fellowship with Christ," p. 158, that in the Christian "doctrine of God," that is, "of the Trinity, is implicated the Christian doctrine of man, which determines the Christian theory of morals and the Christian theory of society." Cf. also Gladstone, "Gleanings," etc., ii. 32.

² Acts xx. 32. The "word" is clearly something that can be stated and mentally apprehended, while it is also full of moral efficacy.

³ 2 Thess. iii. 2.

and humble, free alike from presumption and from apathy; how its appointed sacramental channels, by their own inherent incapacity, refer us to the Power that operates through them, and by their independence of our changes of feeling assist in setting our feet upon the rock. Take Christian doctrine on its own terms: look at it not as caricatured or perverted, but as it is in itself; and you will see how rich it is in motives which lift the soul upwards, which brace its resolves for moral effort, and call forth a thankful and affectionate response to the vast revelation of the Divine charity as centred in a Christ who is God and man.

So it is that the obligations of belief and obedience, contracted in baptism, interlace and combine. So it is that in our daily offices the recitation of the baptismal creed is wisely prefixed to a series of prayers; and that the most solemn part of the Eucharistic service is introduced by that fuller creed which, with the exception of three words, is common to all the historical Churches. Let us not separate what God has joined, but rather try to realize the correspondence of this aspect of Christian truth with this or that other, and the help which each and all can give in the endeavour to live as Christ would have us. It would indeed be a condemnation to have lips fluent with orthodoxy, and a heart cold and a conscience asleep! May He who is the Truth, and who therefore can make us free, give us grace to assimilate the ennobling and purifying influences of doctrines

that reflect some radiance of His glory, and enable us so to vitalize our belief that we may have cause through all eternity to thank Him for such an organ of His gracious self-manifestation as "the one faith which was once delivered to the saints."¹

¹ It can hardly be necessary to refer, on this subject, to Dr. Moberly's essay on "The Incarnation as the Basis of Dogma," in "Lux Mundi," pp. 217-272. In p. 200 he notices the popular objection to Christian theology as a veneered Hellenism, which is also dealt with, from a somewhat different point of view, by Dr. Bigg in his volume on "Neoplatonism," p. 143. See also L. Pullan, "Lectures on Theology," p. 251: "Christian dogma rose rather from the relation of Christians to Judaism than from their relation to Hellenism." When Jews, being Monotheists, became Christians, "they were taught to give worship and blessing to Jesus Christ. What was to be done if they inquired, as they were bound to do, whether Jesus were God, or whether there were, after all, two gods?" etc.

V

The Spiritual Conflict

Eph. vi. 11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

It is a story told of the great Bishop Wilberforce, that being one day suddenly and flippantly asked by a fellow-traveller in a train which was the nearest way to heaven, he answered instantly and decisively, "Take the first turn to the right, and then keep straight on." The ready wit of the reply is even less admirable than its comprehensiveness: it is the Christian morality compressed into a few downright homely words.

But then comes the pinch of the practical difficulty: it is felt, by sad experience, to be hard to "turn to the right," and harder yet, after turning, to "keep straight on." There are so "many adversaries"¹ to be confronted when we have passed through the "open door"; so many inducements, first not to burden ourselves with the strain of a great resolution, and then, if we have risen to the effort, if we have

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

“committed ourselves,” so to speak, by breaking off from this or that form of wrong-doing, not to persevere in the arduous uphill course. Heathen moralists knew at least this, that it was “difficult to be good”: the old heathen allegory represented the hero of the race as standing at a “parting of the ways,” and bidden to choose between austere exacting Virtue, and Vice with its brilliant seductive charm. Men who honestly desired to live worthily of their manhood, to make their higher self, in fact as well as by right, predominant over the lower, were conscious of a weakness that often seemed real incapacity; and Christianity, which has intensified both good and evil, at once requires a righteousness that shall exceed the non-Christian type, and places in a new and awful light at once the fascination and the deadliness of sin. And some Christians, in despondent mood, may half unconsciously formulate the question, “Why does the Supreme Moral Being demand so much of us, and not make it easier to meet His demand?” and then, perhaps, with that dismal facility of self-excusing which veils an unwillingness to respond to the Voice within them, they go on,—“I cannot stand against the tendencies which sweep me along a path which moralists call ‘downward’; and who put those tendencies into me? who made me what I am, prone to this or to that form of self-indulgence? You tell me, God; well then, God is a hard master: He expects more than is fair; His ways are not equal.” Perhaps they add, “I

was told that Christ was the Saviour and Friend of men; why does not He, then, make right living easier?" And what is the virtual conclusion? "I will even disregard these unbearable prohibitions: they may suit other natures, but not mine: I will live my own life, will let myself go."

Ah, whither, O unhappy soul, rushing on into rebellion through want of sympathy with God, as when the first human sinners fell away after questioning His goodwill! For those of us who have not reached that fatal extremity, the true course clearly is to look at the Gospel fairly and all round. Our Lord does, indeed, bid us "strive hard," as men in a bodily contest, "to enter in by the strait gate,"¹ that narrow entrance which leaves no space for a single cherished lust as part of our baggage. He commands His very Apostles to "watch and pray at every season,"² and "what He says to them He says to all:"³ He cannot help saying it, because the requirement arises out of their moral probation. And probation must needs appear more serious and momentous in the light of the Gospel of Christian salvation. For eternal life, as won for us by Christ, is a blessing so unspeakably precious, that the conditions of attaining it must necessarily be exacting. This is why Christians have to be tested by temptations so manifold; and it is precisely the Christian revelation which gives them a more distinct sense of

¹ St. Luke xiii. 25.

² St. Luke xxi. 35.

³ St. Mark xiii. 37.

spiritual danger, of the need of spiritual effort. For it is Christ who warns us of the possibility of a hopeless perdition: "the Fount of love reveals the sinner's hell:"¹ and in regard to our present position, He lifts up a corner of the curtain that had hung over the vast invisible world; He points to an Adversary who succeeds in "snatching away" the good seed when sown in souls that do not care for it; His own immediate visible presence is not allowed to ward off the invasion of that "evil one" from a heart that had already, in purpose, betrayed Him. And the Apostle who was "called" by Christ Himself as enthroned in heaven is just as emphatic as the Master on these mysteriously terrible conditions of the Christian conflict. In the passage to which our text belongs, he tells the Ephesians that "their wrestling" involves more serious issues than may appear at first sight. Their enemies are not, except outwardly, and as it were instrumentally, simply human, "flesh and blood." Men, indeed, can be fierce and relentless, possessed with a passionate hostility to a faith which condemns their idols; but they are to be thought of as possessed (in a peculiar sense) by something more dreadful, more powerful, more malicious,—the secret influence of apostate "princedoms and powers that dominate the world by keeping it in darkness,—of wicked spirits that are as yet permitted to roam abroad in this upper air." These, he says, these are your true formidable

¹ "Lyra Apostolica," p. 103.

enemies : it is against their onset that you need "the whole armour of God."

That there are personal evil spirits under a leader of their own, the original "slanderer" of God, the "friend" or foe of man, is undoubtedly part of the Christian account of things. We cannot disclaim it, nor explain it away as a mere Eastern figure of speech, intended to express forcibly the fact that moral evil exists and is strong for mischief. If our Lord had meant merely to affirm that general fact, He need not, and He would not, have used such varied forms of assertion as to the existence of a "Satan," of a "devil," of a "prince of this world."¹ And what is the difficulty of taking His words in their natural sense? If we believe that human goodness is not the highest goodness that lives and acts in God's creation, that above our world there are angels that have never sinned nor forfeited the "sight of the face of the Father," it should not be hard to believe that below our world too there is an extreme in the other direction, a wickedness all the more intense because it is purely spiritual, not associated with bodily appetites, simply and altogether a self-perversion of will, hating goodness as such, defiant of God even while, as St. James intimates, the rebel creature "trembles" in the consciousness of His irresistible supremacy. And we may surely understand this a little better when we think of the worst forms of human sin,—of the

¹ See especially St. John viii. 44.

“devilish temper”¹ that hates purity, hates simplicity, hates even love, deliberately sets itself to corrupt others, to ruin their fair promise, to deprive God of their loyalty. This temper is an indication, for us who believe in Christ, of some thing really diabolical below. Yet again, it has been pointedly said, “There are strange impulses, horrid thoughts, reducible to no mental law, evil thoughts, which no stretch of the imagination can set down to the corrupt passions, which cannot be traced to disease or human depravity—which witness to contact with him who came and sowed tares among the wheat.”² And yet, while the existence and energy of fallen spirits is affirmed repeatedly in the Gospels, and while one Apostle, for instance, describes their chief as “seeking whom” among men “he may devour,”³ we are not encouraged to imagine in detail under what conditions, and with what methods, they attack us. Assuredly they are not omnipresent nor omniscient; they cannot read our hearts; their power, at the utmost, is strictly limited; for they are not the rivals, but the defeated rebels, of the Most High. Satan is called “the Tempter,” apparently because he and his fellows have some unexplained power of forming a sort of pestilent moral atmosphere, into which men venture, and thereby contract moral

¹ H. S. Holland, “God’s City,” p. 194 ff.

² Cf. Archd. Hutchings, “The Mystery of the Temptation,” p. 79 ff.

³ 1 Peter v. 8.

disease. They have been walking on dangerous ground; their love to God catches a chill, their passions are inflamed into a fever. Or, to adopt St. Paul's imagery, they have gone needlessly into the enemy's country, and arrows tipped with fire are, of course, discharged against them. What are these "fiery darts"? We know too much, perhaps, about them; that is, about strange sudden uprisings within us of evil memories that go far back into the past, but are potent for mischief in the future; or a train of ideas which we know to be dangerous flashes rapidly into our minds, we know not how.¹ Supposing we have not in any way invited them,—we are, so far, clear of responsibility; but are we pleased with their visit? Do we welcome them, or in any sense entertain them, turn them this way and that, consider their attractions, admit their influence? If so, the stage of "thought" has led on to the stage of "pleasure"; and then, in many cases, it is but a step onward to that "consent" which morally forms and constitutes sin. But what if we are honestly pained at their coming? What if we wish to drive them away? In that case our part is clear, our resources ready and ample. Instead of parleying with the intruders, let us recognize them as, in Shakespeare's frequent and significant phrase,² "suggestions" fraught with temptation, and therefore to be

¹ Card. Manning, "Sermons on Sin," p. 179.

² "All's Well," etc. iii. 5; "Love's Labour's Lost," i. 1; "Tempest," i. 1, etc.

instantly repelled. We shall not take a second look at them ; we shall not lose a moment in holding up against them the broad thick shield which, as St. Paul reminds us, will enable us "to quench their fire,"—the shield of a genuine living faith. The words illustrate most vividly the true character of faith ; a mere credence, or a mere affiance, would not have the requisite power : the faith which is effectual at such a crisis must be an act of the whole soul, accepting Christ as Teacher, relying on Christ as Saviour, but also committing itself, devoting itself with an unreserved loyalty,—in mind, in affections, in will,—to Christ as Lord. That is, indeed, a shield of adequate strength. How does Christ interpret the use of it ? As a renewal of allegiance, as a claim of protection, as an appeal to promises never falsified, to the covenant which God will never break, having sworn once by His holiness that He will not fail David. "Lord, I give myself to Thee : Lord, I choose Thee and Thy service ; I renounce every form of self-will : I believe in Thee, I love Thee, I will be absolutely Thine." Can such an act of faith be ineffective ? Will Christ ignore it, and not give the succour which it asks in His adorable name ? One might as well raise the question whether He could cease to be Himself. No, verily ; if He has shown us depths of moral peril which before His Incarnation were unsuspected by the best of His Father's servants, He has more than compensated the shock of that discovery by

unfolding what St. Paul repeatedly calls the "riches" and the "exuberance" of Gospel grace.

In that last word is gathered up all our confidence. Grace is the power of the Holy Spirit, applying to our souls the virtue of the Holy Incarnation in the form of help against sin, of power to advance in Christian virtue. And it is to be had for the asking: we have our Lord's own word for that. If we ask, we shall have. Let us ask, as trusting to obtain. Whenever we are tempted to think the conflict over-hard, let us look up into the face of the Captain of our salvation, who has promised His own blessedness to those that "overcome." For, most assuredly, the quickening of our perception of spiritual danger, and the deepened sense of our responsibility as Christians, are met by a corresponding assurance of help so mighty, so abundant, so exactly appropriate to our several needs as could never have been conceived of except as the outflow of a Divine Incarnation. The mighty inspirations which so often break the chains of sinful habit,—the wealth of animating motive which comes through adhesion to a personal Redeemer,—the experienced results of a faithful use of Sacraments,—all these combine to assure us that the Word made flesh is Himself on our side, that He will indeed fight our battle in us, that all the powers of the heavenly world are mysteriously engaged in the same great warfare which, ever since our baptism, has had a claim

on our individual services. We have to put on,—let us rather say, to keep on, for in a sense we have already assumed,—the whole of that armour which God provides and consecrates. We have to resolve, again and again if necessary, that we will never “ungird our loins,” and never accept defeat; that if we fall, we will do our best to rise again, so that the enemy shall not rejoice over us: and then we may humbly hope that at last, when the arduous contest is ended, our Lord may be able to own us as His soldiers who have not quitted their post: “You did withstand in the evil day,—you ‘did all’ you could,—and now, as sharers in My triumph, you stand before Me, beside Me, for ever.”¹

¹ On the personal agency of evil spirits see Trench, “The Subjection of the Creature to Vanity,” p. 50; Liddon, “Passiontide Sermons,” pp. 90-95; Gladstone, “Studies subsidiary to Butler’s Works,” p. 213.

VI

Superficial Religiousness

St. Luke viii. 13 : "Those on the rock are they which, when they have heard, receive the word with joy : and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

THERE is a sort of religious optimism which would fain hear "smooth things," and only smooth things, as to the conditions of the contest between good and evil in this world. The best corrective of this tendency to self-illusion will be found in passages of the Gospels which remind us that our Lord came to bear witness unto the truth, and therefore not to attenuate or gloss over those darker facts of our spiritual history, and those more sombre aspects of religion, which the "natural" man,—or, as St. Paul's phrase would be better rendered, the unspiritual man,¹—is only too glad to avoid looking at, as persons with sensitive nerves instinctively turn away from a gloomy or "distressing" picture, with a sort of wish that it could be curtained off from view. But as nature has

¹ See Bishop Ellicott on 1 Cor. ii. 14.

terrible facts for which she provides no curtain, facts which she insists on holding up straight before us, even so does religion refuse to accommodate our delicate susceptibilities by sparing us the contemplation of truths which inspire dread. St. Augustine, in one of his inevitable controversies, had to point out to assailants of the Old Testament that the Gospel also had a very severe side ;¹ and we in our day shall be none the worse for being reminded, as a great modern preacher expressed it,² that " the Gospel revelation spoke as sternly as did the Law, when truth required outspokenness." Instances of this feature in our Lord's own teaching will be found not only in the terrible chapter of the Eight Woes, but even here and there in the pages of that Evangelist who pictures Him as the compassionate Healer of all the wounds and woes of humanity. It is St. Luke who records the sentence passed in parabolic form on enemies who " would not have Jesus to reign over them,"—that is, who persist with open-eyed obduracy in refusing His offers, in whose case He is " set for " such a " fall " as precludes a " rising-up."

But the parable before us, which appears in all the first three Gospels, might be called yet more elaborately disheartening, in that it sets before us three specimens of the failure of God's word among human souls, as against one of success. In three instances, our Lord, who is

¹ " C. Advers. Legis et Proph." i. c. 16.

² Liddon, " Univ. Sermon " ii. 271.

symbolized as a sower of good seed, represents His own work as thwarted by various causes, all connected with certain conditions in the ground or soil of the human heart. We are disposed to ask, Why is this permitted? Why does Divine goodness united with Divine power endure a defeat which at once derogates from its majesty and brings its beneficent purpose to nought? This, however, is the old question, ever new in its painful and often most baneful urgency: Why is evil—not only physical evil, but, what is much worse, the gravest moral evil—allowed to exist, to work and spread and rage and conquer, before the throne of a God who hates it? All that we can say comes to this, that its presence and activity are conditions of that moral probation the supposition of which, as one has said who was mercifully brought out of unbelief into faith, can alone enable us “to give any meaning to the world, that is, any *raison d’être* of human existence.”¹ And before we look into any details of the parable, we must combine it as a whole with all those Scripture teachings which remind us that probation and responsibility presuppose a real though limited freedom, which in turn excludes quite definitively the notion that any individual soul is fated to be like this ground or like that. There can be no such a fatality, even in the form of an interior necessity pre-determining a man’s conduct, under the sovereignty of Him who says to each soul, as it runs its course under His

¹ G. J. Romanes, “Thoughts on Religion,” p. 142.

inspection, "I have set before thee life and good, and death and evil, therefore choose life;" and who, if He did *not* say this, could never make that other announcement, "I will judge you every one after his ways."¹ And again, this same parable, and that of the tares which immediately follows it, belong to a series of eight,² five of which dwell on the various ways in which "the word of the Kingdom" does really succeed and do its work: so that by these the balance of our thoughts, which the story of the sower's three failures might have disturbed, can be redressed, and hope can recover the foothold that a first impression might have shaken.

Much might be said of the symbolism of the hard pathway and of the ground thick-set with thorns. Here is a soul that is simply callous to all spiritual impressions, that hears as if it heard not; there, a soul which does indeed receive the word, but not "with pure affection,"—which allows it to be overgrown and stifled by "worldly anxiety, by the deceitfulness of riches, by pleasures and the entrance of desires about other things,"—a comprehensive phrase in which St. Mark sums up much. But let us now confine ourselves to the case which comes between these two, in which the seed falls on "rocky places," which have but a thin coating of poor soil with-

¹ Deut. xxx. 15, 19; Ezek. xxxiii. 20.

² That is, including the parable of the seed growing secretly in St. Mark iv. 26. The parable of the draw-net is analogous to that of the tares.

out either "depth" or "moisture." Here the seed can indeed spring up rapidly, "immediately," just because the ground is so shallow. In the words of the best of English commentators on the Parables,¹ "while the rock below hinders it from striking deeply downward, it" energizes "the more luxuriantly in the stalk." To a careless eye the upgrowth may look promising; but what follows? The sun rises, with that hot wind of a Syrian morning which St. James describes as "withering up the grass"; it scorches the premature blade: there is no strength beneath to resist such a trial of vitality; because it has no moisture, as St. Luke says,—because it has no root, as St. Matthew and St. Mark state the case more expressly,—it withers away, it is dead.

Our Lord Himself supplies the comment which, according to two evangelists, the disciples asked for after listening to the parable. The rocky ground, He says, is a picture of one who "as soon as he has heard the word, immediately receives it with joy; but hath not root in himself, and so perseveres only for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, he immediately stumbles,"—or, in St. Luke's downright phrase, he "falls away." Now what is the character here indicated? It is that of one whose religiousness is sentimental, and therefore superficial. He is far from unimpressionable; on the contrary, he receives from his contact with

¹ Trench on Parables, p. 71.

Christianity an impression that is real as far as it goes, but does not go nearly far enough, and therefore proves to be short-lived. He is attracted by much in Christian religion that to imaginations less quick and tempers less genial might have but little "comeliness"; its beauty, its sublimity, its gloriousness, appeal to him with a force that seems to tell on his whole being. How comprehensive it is, he says, how harmonious, how sympathetic,

"How worthy God, how suitable to man;"

what views it opens of the meaning and worth of life, of human capacity, of Divine Fatherhood; what a light it sheds on history; what a glory beams around its saints; what an impulse it gives to the charity that issues in self-sacrifice! He feels all this; he is more than interested, he is stimulated, or even enkindled; a moving sermon or a majestic service can make his eyes fill and set his heart in a glow; he is well pleased with himself for being so religiously appreciative; he says, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." It looks well, it seems hopeful; but has the soil moisture, and has it root? Is all this lively, emotional warmth more reliable for serious effects than the æsthetic delight which one man will take in a fine poem, and another in a fine picture? Is it not a mere reproduction, under modern conditions, of the satisfaction with which some of Ezekiel's fellow-exiles listened to his words as if to a beautiful piece of music, without the slightest intention of

doing what he told them ;¹ or with which even Antipas used to "hear" the Baptist "gladly," because he could respect the goodness which he could not brace himself up to imitate? As a wise expositor has said, "Quick sensibility and gladness is not always the best sign, where the strength diffuses itself on things outward, and is spent in them."² And this sensibility is all that the character represented by the rocky ground has to fall back upon when the stress of trial comes in earnest ; and then, when adherence to Christ begins to cost something, the sentimental Christian, who

"lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
And faints at every woe."³

He has not bargained for this ; he stops short, as one who finds a barrier across his path ; he "turns back and walks no more with Jesus." In the old times of heathen persecution, too many a convert thus proved himself like-minded with Demas ; in the first age of our English Church history, a local outbreak of pestilence was apt to scare the raw proselytes back to the idols which in baptism they had abjured ;⁴ and even now a very much less severe test, applied to persons of this type of character, will expose the shallowness of their religious life. The cold look, the bitter sneer, the spiteful misconstruction

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 30.

² Bengel on St. Matt. xiii. 20.

³ "Lyra Apostolica," p. 85.

⁴ Bede, iii. 30 ; iv. 27.

of motive,—these may be as the scorching wind that blasts the unstable plant. And the result is heart-sickening disappointment to elder friends or pastors, who had thought “that young man” so earnest and so hopeful, and had so gladly assumed that he had the root of the matter in him. Unhappily this was just what he had *not*.

It is, then, of urgent importance that we should be, as the Apostle says, “rooted and grounded in love,” or, as he elsewhere puts it yet more pointedly and profoundly, “rooted in Christ.”¹ He means, Take care that your religion is not a thing of sentiment, but of principle consolidated into action. The idea is practically the same which our Lord has clothed in other imagery; the house of our moral and spiritual life must not be built on sand, but on rock, if it is to stand the rising flood and the stormy gale. And the rock is Christ; and the root is loyalty to Christ. Two things may be mentioned as points to aim at. Let us cherish a sense of the claims of Christian duty. Persons would not be so easily content with superficial pietism if they felt themselves to be living under a law, although it be a “law of the Spirit.” We must not attempt to live as if we were our own masters, for we are “under law to Christ.” He is not merely an Elder Brother and our sympathizing Intercessor; He is our King, our absolute Sovereign Lord. We owe Him the lowliest homage, the most unreserved, unquestioning obedience. He commands us to do this and

¹ Eph. iii. 17; Col. ii. 6.

avoid that ; He gives us access to all the help that we can need for the fulfilment of our baptismal obligations ; and He judges us, He cannot but judge us, according to our opportunities, as He will finally judge us at the close of our life-long trial. And again, let us keep watch against unreal professions, unreal estimates of our own degree of attainment, unreal satisfaction as to our own facility of good feeling, our own contentment with the consciousness of good desires or the formation of good resolutions. What is it which fosters this complex self-deceit ? What but a wilful ignorance of our own infirmity ? What but the "folly" of him who "trusts his own heart" ?¹ If we would be "men in understanding," we must put away the childishness of relying on emotion, instead of using it forthwith as a stimulus for the next piece of duty ;² for this is its appointed function—to sweeten obedience, and to make temptation less attractive. So let us use, without abusing, whatever enjoyment of holy things is granted us ; and then, by calling out our affections in the service of Him who is altogether lovable, it will tend to consolidate love as a principle of conduct, as a root which may fructify with that "patience" which perseveres through every trial, until it has won the "approval" of the Judge.³

¹ Prov. xxviii. 26.

² Newman, "Serm." i. 118.

³ See Gifford on Rom. v. 4 ("Speaker's Comm.").

VII

A Ministry to the Unresponsive

Ezek. ii. 3, 4: "And He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation, that hath rebelled against Me. . . I do send thee unto them: and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God."

THE eighteenth Sunday after Trinity is one of three on which the Church puts, as it were, into our hands some characteristic pages in Ezekiel's roll of prophecy. It is confessedly, in parts, a difficult book; we are told that the Jewish rabbis forbade their scholars under thirty years of age to read either the opening or the concluding portions: they might lose their way, it was thought, in trying to make out the import of that complex and mystic imagery. But the occasional dimness, not to say darkness, is relieved by vivid bursts of light so clear "that it is dreadful," which can pierce through thickest folds of self-delusion, and show an honest soul what it has not realized as to its own condition before its Judge. In a word, there is no prophet whose

practical teaching is more luminous and emphatic, more capable of making good its claim over heart and conscience, than is that of him who lived and preached among the exiles beside the river Chebar.

The story of his ministry is rich in personal interest. All the prophets had to be, in some sense, confessors: they prefigured the Christ in their own experience as enduring the contradiction of sinners,¹ if not by dying,—as one or two, perhaps, did actually die,—for their witness to the truth, yet by suffering what might often be harder to bear than a speedy death. Ezekiel was not, indeed, openly cursed by his fellow-countrymen, not thrust into a dungeon full of mire, not saved, just in time, from starvation by a foreigner's kindly interference. This was Jeremiah's portion:² his was different, but it was often very bitter. He needed, we may be sure, all the support which could be derived from a constant remembrance of the glorious vision, terminating in "the appearance of a Man above on the throne" of sapphire,—which his eyes were opened to see when he was called to his great office.³ He was then addressed by the title "Son of man," as if to indicate a certain special relation between him and the fellow-men to whom he was sent,—a relation shadowing forth that unique headship of our race which was to belong to its Incarnate Redeemer. And as that Redeemer was in His

¹ Heb. xii. 3.

² Jer. xv. 10; xxxviii. 6-10.

³ Ezek. i. 4-26.

day to be grieved at men's hardness of heart, and even to cry out, "How long shall I suffer you?"¹ so was Ezekiel warned not to look for an easy ministry, but to speak God's word to a rebellious house, to the impudent and the stiff-hearted, whether they would hear, or whether (as was but too likely) they would forbear.² The men around him, his fellow-exiles, were not so bad, not so obstinately given up to sin, as some who lived at home in Jerusalem, and whose various enormities were pictured for him in a vision that takes up the eighth chapter of his book. Still, they would be largely unresponsive, unimpressed, or even hostile, and to live with them would be like dwelling among scorpions;³ the warnings of judgment which he would have to utter, as when a sentinel blows a trumpet,⁴ would often be unheeded; the prophet would be isolated, suspected, ignored; he would need exceptional firmness to stand up against dogged opposition; his forehead must be as an adamant harder than flint;⁵ at last, when tried by the sorest of family sorrows, he would be bidden to refrain from mourning over his dead wife, if haply at such a cost he could prepare the dull hard minds of these unworthy Israelites for a wide-spread misery too deep for the relief of tears.⁶

In various ways, he lets us see the profound truth of that tremendous explanation of the

¹ St. Mark iii. 5; ix. 19.

² Ezek. ii. 4, 5, 7.

³ Ezek. ii. 6.

⁴ Ezek. iii. 17-21; xxxiii. 2-9.

⁵ Ezek. iii. 9.

⁶ Ezek. xxiv. 16-24.

disappointments and failures which were to trouble his ministry, as in modern forms they still test the faith and depress the spirit of many a bearer of Christ's message. This is what makes Ezekiel's book so living a book for ministers of the Gospel. "We may preach and preach," said a great bishop once to his ordinands, "and our words will seem to fall upon a stone, and not upon a man's heart."¹ Under any such trials of patience and hopefulness, Ezekiel's experience will prove helpful. How awful is the reason assigned for a callousness which afflicts him! They "will not hearken unto thee, *for* they will not hearken unto Me."² As our Lord said long afterwards, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated Me before it hated you."³ The servant could not expect to be welcomed, when the Lord had been in effect rejected. The exiles' hearts were not right with God; therefore, of course, they could not appreciate God's envoy. What they said, as he reports it, exhibits human perversity in some very advanced forms, which are by no means obsolete; it is only too easy to translate their objections into language which is anything but dead.

Let us look at them, and listen to them, for a few moments.

Hear some of them complain that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. "We are punished because

¹ Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford, in 1848.

² Ezek. iii. 7.

³ St. John xv. 18.

our fathers sinned ; is that fair ? Can the way of the Lord be called straight ?¹ It is not straight, but twisted, contorted, and our sense of justice is shocked : ” as many now-a-days declare that the inequalities of human condition, or other natural facts which “ cannot be smoothed over or explained away,” have made them incapable of believing that the world is governed by a righteous Providence. Or there are those who openly say, “ We will be as the heathen : ”² it is the cry of that wild impatience which would fain get rid of the responsibilities avowedly involved in the profession of religion. Or if the mood is not so distinctly rebellious, it is that of a sullen despair which masks itself under an apparent acknowledgment of sin : “ Our hope is lost, we are cut off, we pine away in our transgressions,—how then should we live ? ”³ The gloom, we see, is faithless, even if it does not reach the point of revolt. Again, there are others who reject, as we might say, on the grounds of “ common sense and common experience,” the supernatural character of prophecy ; “ every vision faileth ”⁴—predictions are disproved, or, to quote a modern dictum, “ miracles do not happen ; ” Ezekiel is, in effect, bluntly told that “ facts are against him.” Or even, say others, “ if there is something in his prophecies, the vision is of times far off : ”⁵ things will last our time, we need not

¹ Ezek. xviii. 2, 25 ; xxxiii. 17.

² Ezek. xx. 32.

³ Ezek. xxxvii. 11 ; xxxiii. 10.

⁴ Ezek. xii. 22.

⁵ Ezek. xii. 27.

disturb ourselves,—as a comfortable selfishness has often persuaded itself before some great “day of the Son of man,” for instance, in the years that ushered in the French Revolution. Or others have their own prophets, much better worth hearing than Ezekiel, who tell them what is pleasant to think of, with no austere requirements, no rigid prohibitions, no croaking “bodements” of a dismal intolerable future; the result of which is, that “the hands of the wicked are strengthened to go on in their evil way” by “visions of a peace that is no peace.”¹ Or the style and contents of Ezekiel’s preaching are cavilled at: the misgivings which it secretly awakens are silenced by critical remarks on its obscurity: “They say of me, Doth he not speak parables?”² Practical men, they assume, may well dispense with attending to a voice that cannot put plain meaning into plain words. Or there are others, probably among the younger sort, who at first sight seem more promising: they listen to the prophet with real enjoyment, as they might to one who can sing pleasantly and “play well”: only it is a merely æsthetic pleasure, a gratification of the sense of beauty for its own sake, with no moral movement of the will: “they hear thy words, but they do them not.”³ And have we not known that persons can flock to a harvest festival, or a “bright service” full of hymns, and be none the better for it, precisely for that same reason?

¹ Ezek. xiii. 16, 22.

² Ezek. xx. 49.

³ See p. 55.

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Or, lastly, there are men grave and "highly respectable," who come with all appearance of seriousness to sit before Ezekiel as pupils, and inquire, through him, of the Lord; but he is bidden to repel them as self-deceivers who have set up, and retain, "their idols in their hearts": favourite sins with them prove stumbling-blocks to bar all progress upward; therefore on them shall come the doom of being "answered according to their idols."¹ With them, as froward, the All-seeing will, in the Psalmist's terribly bold phrase, "show Himself froward"; they will incur that penalty which Scripture describes as a blinding of their eyes and a hardening of their heart, and which essentially consists in their being left to themselves without the light which they do not sincerely seek for, left, in fact, to take their own way, and see what will come of it. This line of Biblical language has caused difficulties which cannot be passed over; the more so, because one passage in which it is found² is of all passages in the Old Testament the one most frequently cited in the New; and St. John, with a startling distinctness, attributes the "blinding" and "hardening" to the Lord. But the explanation must be found in that law of ethical life whereby persistency in self-will, —the process, as Shakespeare, in an awfully vivid passage, calls it, of "growing hard in viciousness,"³—does inevitably produce moral insensibility. All serious

¹ Ezek. xiv. 1-3.

² Isa. vi. 10.

³ "Antony and Cleopatra," iii. 11.

moralists, whatever be their theological standpoint, will admit this to be a fact; and all who believe in a God will see in it a revelation of His character, so that when it works, He is in fact allowing it to take its course. And it is the method of Scripture writers to impress the fact on men's minds with a concrete vividness by representing such action on God's part as a literal penal infliction. There, anyhow, stands the fact, and we have to reckon with it. Let us also fear, and be on our guard lest, for lack of the single-eyed purpose which our Lord insists upon in His great sermon, we too should be left in the great darkness which waits like a shadow on hardness of heart.

Ezekiel's ministry was, as we thus see, pre-eminently a ministry of penetration into character. Its leading feature is a close, severe, persistent dealing with conscience; he has been truly called "the prophet of personal responsibility."¹ Earlier writers in the Old Testament had not brought out what their times were not ripe for, the relation of the human personality, of each human being by himself, to a personal and moral God. He removes the veil which had formerly obscured the individual's single and separate importance in the sight of Him who can say, "All souls are Mine."² He shows that if, to some extent, heredity involves very real disadvantage, if children suffer because

¹ Dean Church, "Discipline of the Christian Character," p. 70.

² Ezek. xviii. 4. Mozley, "Ruling Ideas," etc., p. 120.

parents or ancestors have sinned, yet in the last resort no one soul will be spiritually rejected from the mercies and blessings of the Divine covenant simply on account of the sins of other persons, which he has not personally shared in or made his own. So does Ezekiel prepare the way for that Saviour who, while He built up His Church as a spiritual home for all believers, conferred a new dignity, sacredness, preciousness, on each individual soul for whom He died.

Here then, surely, is one of the lessons—the chief lesson, we may say, in practical importance—which Ezekiel has to teach us Christians and Church-people to-day. What a thought it is, the interest that the Most High God takes in each one of us singly,

“as if beside

Nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth!”

That fact has a twofold bearing: it imposes on us the obligation of walking in the fear of the Lord, of standing in awe and striving not to sin, of recognizing that the revelation of a true God, as culminating in the Incarnation of a Son of God who gave Himself up for us all, must needs have a stern side. Ezekiel's teaching on this point should be regarded as a prophetic forecast of some sayings of our Lord and of St. Paul. But the other aspect of our personal relation to God is that in which the Gospel mainly presents Him—that which was illuminated by the Cross, and summarized in

St. John's assertion that He is Love. And there are hardly any passages in the Old Testament which contain such preludes of this "music of the Gospel" as the appeal which concludes our Prophet's eighteenth chapter. Let us turn to it again, let us keep it in our hearts; the spirit of Christ Himself is in the words. "Cast away from you," it says to us, "all your transgressions; why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure" (elsewhere it is, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure) in the death of him that dieth: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye."

"Turn yourselves?" we may ask. "Is this the Christian doctrine of conversion? Are we not taught to depend on a converting grace? Is not our helplessness in default of grace a commonplace of theologians and preachers? Well, is not that truth indicated by the Psalmist's language about "the law of the Lord," or the Lord Himself, as "restoring the soul," or by Elijah's prayer on Carmel, "Hear me, that this people may know that Thou hast turned their heart back again," and yet more touchingly, perhaps, by the prayer which Jeremiah puts into Ephraim's mouth, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned"? When, in the light of such words, we read Ezekiel's exhortation, we understand that when a penitent turns himself to God, he is in fact responding to a movement from God, and using a power which that movement has supplied. So it is that two elements concur in the process of conversion: a Saul replies

duteously to the remonstance, "Why persecutest thou Me?" an Augustine, having "taken up and read" the Pauline summary of a Christian's moral obligations, surrenders his will absolutely to the practical requirements of the creed which his mind had become ready to accept.¹ We, all of us, may hear, if we do not wilfully shut our ears, the voice which would draw us to the Christ of Apostles and all saints; if we listen, we shall receive strength to obey. "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in unto Him." So said the Lord Jesus; and can we not trust Him?

¹ Cf. St. Aug., "Confess.," viii. 1, 2, 12, 18-29. He had been praying for strength "now, this very hour," to break decisively with "the flesh," when he heard a voice saying, "*Tolle, lege*," took it for a sign, and opened the *codex* of St. Paul at Rom. xiii. 13, 14. "I had no wish," he says, "and no need, to read further."

VIII

Conversion

Ps. li. 13 (R. V.): "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

WHO is it that here promises to himself the successful discharge of a ministry at once so momentous and so arduous? It is, as we all know, a sinner among sinners, profoundly conscious of a tremendous fall, which has immersed his soul in guilt. His prayer begins with a cry for mercy; it is *the* "Miserere," as we commonly reckon it, although two other psalms in the Latin version begin with the same grief-laden word. This psalmist, whoever he was, lives on in his own pathetic strain as a chief of penitents; his very heart cries for the pardon which alone can blot out iniquities; but he wants more than forgiveness—he longs to be inwardly rectified and cleansed. He deserves to be exiled from the presence of the Holy One, but he hopes to be spared so total a forfeiture—even to recover the joy of spiritual health, to be again invigorated with the purpose of willing

service. And then he looks forward to using aright the opportunities which, either officially or personally, may be his in the near future : he will teach those who have gone aside, out of God's ways, how to return into them and walk in them, and sinners shall thus by his agency be converted, or shall return, to God. Perhaps it may occur to some of us that it would better befit him to sit apart in humble silence than to ascend the chair of the teacher or grasp the staff of the guide. And yet he feels, we take it for granted, that his own dismal experience might very really assist him in dealing with others who, like himself, have fallen, but have not as yet, like himself, been restored. The fact of sin as a standing enormity in God's universe, as the main cause of human debasement and wretchedness,—this dire fact glares at him, haunts him persistently like a horror, and makes him eager to do something, and that speedily, for the recovery of those whose life it has poisoned, and whom, perchance, he might persuade to see it as it is in the light of God's countenance,—if only he might be employed as an instrument of their conversion.

Conversion—the word is part of our stock of religious terms ; but what is the mental picture that it calls up ? What is the idea which underlies our use of it ? The idea of human waywardness—of our proneness to go wrong when we should and could go right. Scripture, especially the older Scripture, represents the course of duty for God's servants as a path marked

out by Him, in which they must walk without diverging to the right hand or to the left: a path of the just, a path of peace, a highway of holiness, in which wayfaring men shall not err, even the way of God's commandments, in which men shall sing joyously to His glory, and shall hear behind them a voice saying audibly enough, "This," and no other, "is *the way*."¹ In one verse of a signally beautiful psalm, "Good and righteous is the Lord; therefore will He instruct sinners in *the way*,"² we seem to find one source of that significant mode of speaking by which, as we read in the Acts,³ the Hebrew Christians compendiously described their new religion as "the way," or "the way of the Lord," as the plan of life which most fully verified the Old Testament language, and which was concentrated in Him who was Himself "the Way," because He was "the Truth and the Life." Yes, but human nature had received in its infancy a fatal bias towards evil, a twist or warp which made it "strive after the forbidden,"—a "law of sin in the flesh,"—a lust of disobedience, because prohibition gave a zest to the thing prohibited: and it had to learn by its own experience of husks and swine-troughs, of things which seemed sweet and which tasted bitter, how hard are the ways of transgression,⁴ how

¹ Isa. xxx. 21; xxvi. 7; xxxv. 8; Prov. iii. 17; iv. 18; Ps. cxxxviii. 5.

² Ps. xxv. 8.

³ Acts ix. 2; xviii. 25, 26; xix. 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 22.

⁴ Prov. xiii. 15. Cf. Jer. ii. 19.

miserable the results of perversity. And then as prophets, each in his place, are raised up to plead with a people "rebellious and stiff-hearted," we hear that voice whose very tenderness is awful, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings:" "Turn yourselves and live ye:" if the wicked will but turn "from all his sins, he shall surely live, because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions:" "Turn ye even to Me with all your heart; turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful."¹ But more than this: these older books have language which anticipates the Pauline doctrine, technically called that of "prevenient"² or originative grace—of grace as being beforehand with us, as addressing itself to chilled, torpid affections, as "stirring up the will" to choose aright, bestowing also a new capacity for such a choice, but not forcing the soul to use it—a point of the utmost importance, of which St. Augustine most unfortunately lost hold. For we see this shadowed forth in the deeply pathetic words, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love,"³ that is, by attraction and not by compulsion; and again, with regard to the same imagery of turning

¹ Jer. iii. 22; Ezek. xviii. 27, 28, 32; Joel ii. 12, 13.

² St. Augustine built much on the Latin version of our Ps. lix. 10, "Misericordia ejus præveniet me;" see his "De Natura et Gratia," 35. But Professor Driver informs me that this and the LXX. rendering, *προφθάσει με*, are not correct, and that the verb really means, "come in front of," so as to "meet." So Bishop Perowne, *in loc.*

³ See above, p. 16. Cp. St. John vi. 44.

round, Jeremiah represents Ephraim, that is, the ten tribes, as saying, "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned, for Thou art the Lord my God;"¹ and yet again, in the great contest between Elijah and the crowd of Baal-priests on Mount Carmel, the prophet resorts to prayer for a special Divine operation, for a miracle, as we might say, of converting grace: "Hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."²

When the heart responds to that gracious touch—when the soul answers with a resolution born of contrition, "Yes, Lord, I *will* return,"—when it thus uses the originative grace, and so makes itself competent to receive the further grace which will develop resolution into sustained endeavour,—conversion has taken place. And when it has taken place, or, to use the terse words of Charles Kingsley, "as soon as man turns round, and instead of doing wrong, tries to do right, he need be under no manner of fear or terror any more: he is taken back into his Father's house as freely and graciously as the prodigal son was; whatsoever dark score there was against him in God's books is wiped out there and then, and he starts clear, a new man with a fresh chance of life,"³ for God does not forgive by halves.

None of us will dare to say, "This doctrine of conversion does not concern me." Are we

¹ Jer. xxxi. 18.

² 1 Kings xviii. 37.

³ "The Good News of God," p. 121.

not in the habit of confessing to the Searcher of all hearts that "we have erred and strayed from His ways"? and is not this implicitly a prayer that He will enable us to return to Him? It has indeed been imagined that those who believe in baptismal regeneration must needs be indifferent to the importance of conversion. But this is an absolute mistake, which can be traced to the antecedent misconception as to the sense which the Church puts on "regeneration." It implies the infusion of a new principle of spiritual life: but this is not identical with the development of that principle, any more than birth is identical with healthy maturity. Any one who intelligently asserts that baptism has the effect which the Prayer-book ascribes to it, will say with equal confidence, that when baptismal grace has been subsequently neglected, and baptismal obligations have been ignored or set at nought, the mischief has to be undone by repentance, which *is* conversion: and such conversion is not only not inconsistent with, but actually presupposes, that condition of sonship which was conferred through the initiatory sacrament. It has been well said in an admirable treatise on the Thirty-nine Articles, that the relation between regeneration and conversion may be illustrated by the parable of the prodigal, who, as St. Chrysostom has it, "represents to us those who have fallen into sin after their baptismal cleansing." The writer to whom I refer expands this thought: "it was just because the prodigal *was*" still "a son that

he could venture to arise and go to his father, and say, Father," while in the same breath he owned himself unworthy of filial privileges: and "so also just because a person *is* a child of God in virtue of his baptism, he can venture to arise, and, confessing his sin, yet call God by the name of Father."¹

But there is another mistake, which has too often most seriously disturbed the proportions of truth, and eventually put error in the place of truth, with results which have been but too justly called "destructive."² Persons forget, to begin with, that human characters are widely different; that men are not, after all, in their intrinsic natures or temperaments uniform, but, on the contrary, multiform; that their tendencies, capacities, and needs are indefinitely various; and that the Divine Physician adapts His treatment of souls to the special condition of each, according to that "manifold wisdom" which discriminates each from the rest while providing impartially for all. This is overlooked in a hasty love of simplification. And so the process of conversion, which in fact admits of very great differences in its occasions and methods, is often restricted to some one isolated event in a man's spiritual history; and if he has not consciously undergone, at some particular time and place, and with a clear consciousness, a sudden transitional movement from darkness to light, he is supposed not to

¹ Gibson "On the Articles," ii. 633.

² Sadler, "The Second Adam," etc., p. 173.

have been "converted" at all.¹ If he has undergone it, then all is right with him: up to a certain hour he was "dead," and then he became "alive," or, as it is also yet more boldly expressed, he became a "saved soul." For two reasons, apparently, it suits people to take this view. First, they like to concentrate their thought on critical moments, just as they admire strong effects or breadth of colouring in a picture. It is easier for them to apprehend "conversion" as a single tangible fact of which they can feel sensibly cognisant. But that is not all: well if it were! For this way of looking at the matter becomes acceptable as gratifying a very unhealthy instinct, by diminishing the sense of responsibility. In the words of one who spoke from a wide experience, "we can scarcely have any idea of the extent of false teaching connected with conversion,—such a preaching of it as leads the unconverted to suppose that they have as yet nothing to do

¹ See Newman's "Letters," i. 122. He says of himself, "He had not been converted in that special way which" the evangelical system "laid down as imperative, but so plainly against rule as to make it very doubtful in the eyes of normal evangelicals whether he had really been converted at all." Perhaps the following lines, written by Crabbe in 1810, will be thought to contain some exaggeration; yet they describe what since his time has characterized Revivalism. He makes a Calvinistic Methodist ask—

"Can grace be gradual? can conversion grow?

The work is done by instantaneous call,

Converts at once are made, or not at all," etc.

"The Borough," Letter 4.

with God, and so that it is not their fault if they are now alienated from God, inasmuch as they can do nothing to forward . . . their repentance.”¹ Or, as this terrible error has been put into popular forms, they are encouraged to say, “When God wants me He will come for me.” Of course no one will deny that there have been great cases of apparently sudden conversion: and yet even in these there have doubtless been antecedents at work out of sight, by which the ground was being prepared in a true though mysterious order. We gather from our Lord’s own words to Saul on the road to Damascus, that the persecuting zealot had felt certain “goadings” of compunction, and was striving to get rid of them by a vehement resolve: and St. Augustine, looking back over the years that preceded his final self-surrender beneath the fig-tree in the Milanese garden, compresses much experience into a few words, “Thou didst deal with me in wonderful ways—” *Egisti mecum miris modis.*² And something like this would probably have been acknowledged, on reflection, by those whose conversion might to human eyes appear most abrupt.³

The question, “Are you converted?” is sometimes put in a blunt, offhand fashion which implies neither considerateness nor reverence. In the words of a saintly Scottish bishop,⁴ the

¹ Sadler, *loc. cit.*

² “Confess.,” v. 13.

³ E.g. Colonel Gardiner or St. Hubert.

⁴ The late Bishop Forbes of Brechin. St. Bernard says

question should run in an altered form, "Are you *being* converted?" and should be addressed in the first instance to ourselves. Let us so use it, and by means of it break down that fence of a fictitious personality which we are apt to construct out of what is really accidental to us,¹ our official position, our intellectual abilities, the good opinion of others, the affection of our friends; let us get behind all these, and see how the real self stands in the sight of God. Am I trying to be right with Him? Do I honestly desire to know the truth about myself, instead of "laying to my soul the flattering unction" of kindly estimates, which imply a knowledge comparatively superficial? Instead of making a new version of the Pharisee's thanksgiving, let us say with bowed head, "That which I know not, teach Thou me: be merciful to me, sinner that I am: help me to turn right round from all that is evil or that leads into evil, to break with sin as such, to be frank, confiding, and thoroughgoing in my intercourse with Thee, to hide myself no more as 'among trees of a garden,' to make a clean breast and a clean sweep in regard to every lurking form of rebellious self-will." Can such a prayer, sent upward in the all-prevailing name of the Lord Jesus, by any possibility fail of a gracious hear-

that conversion "non una die perficitur: utinam vel in omni vita . . . valeat consummari! . . . Convertatur ad Dominum amor tuus . . . convertatur etiam ad ipsum timor tuus . . ."—"In Cap. Jejun." serm. ii. 2, 3.

¹ I owe this phrase to a sermon of Canon Eyton's.

ing? Surely we know God better than to wrong Him by such a doubt ; surely we can trust His word, who said, " Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do : if ye shall ask anything in My name, I *will* do it." ¹ And so, in express reliance on these promises, let us use more frequently, and with fuller sincerity as we enter more into its purport, the prayer which on Ash Wednesday the Church adapts for us from one of the most moving of prophetic contexts : " Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned." ²

¹ St. John xiv. 13, 14.

² See Pusey, "Lenten Sermons," p. 69: "Half-conversion, unconversion." Also G. J. Romanes, "Thoughts on Religion," p. 163 ; and the Duke of Argyll, "The Philosophy of Belief," p. 379. The latter writer observes that this "transformation of personal character is represented as a process continuous and needing our own co-operation," etc.

IX

The Perfecting of Imperfection

Ps. cxxxviii. : "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

It has been said by one of those teachers whom the English Church has lost in recent years,—by one who entered with pre-eminent sympathy into the religious spirit of the Psalter as a main element in her worship,—that therein lies the "evidence of a faculty in the human soul for knowing its Maker and its God, in some such way as we know" the personalities around us ;—that we can effectively know God as we effectively know each other.¹ Certainly the Psalmists speak to God as to One whom they do thus know ; they recognize in Him the perfection of character ; without any sense of effort, in a tone the farthest removed from formalism, they pour out their hearts before Him, they appeal to His infinite loving-kindness, they confide in Him as to the difficulties or perplexities suggested by His government of the world. It is the attitude of thoughtful and

¹ Church, "The Gifts of Civilization," etc., p. 439.

dutiful sons in the presence of a perfect Father, absolutely trusted and gratefully loved. So it is in the Psalm before us; the poet is conscious of weakness, but believes that prayer will bring him interior strength; he has to walk in the midst of trouble, but he is sure that his God will refresh or revive him; wrathful enemies may encircle him, but there is a Divine right hand stretched out. The ways of the Lord are a subject for heartfelt rejoicing: He has magnified "His word above all his name," or, as we might put it, the certainty or fulfilment of His promises is the most impressive form of His self-manifestation. And then in the last verse, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: yea, Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not Thou the work of Thine own hands." It is not that he thinks he might be forsaken; the prayer is but a sample of that tender "irony" which adopts the language of anxiety in order to enhance the pleasure of assurance.¹ "*He* to forsake the work of His hands! Not *He*, indeed! How could *He*, when *He* can be so fully trusted to perfect, complete, fill up,—what concerns me, what affects my deepest interest?"

It is a personal reliance on a God who personally cares for the speaker. The words have a ring of faith, like that great word of the Apostle, "I know Him whom I have believed."² One may also be reminded of that consciousness of "two and two only luminously self-evident

¹ Mozley's "Essays," ii. 216.

² 2 Tim. i. 12.

beings, myself and my Creator," which accompanied Cardinal Newman throughout his life.¹ It was a one-sided feeling, like many other intense feelings ; it wanted correction and balance ; but still there is a truth in it. In a sense, we are severally alone with God. "The Lord, the ever-faithful God of the Covenant, He is here on one hand ; I myself confront Him on the other. What concerns me does really concern Him : such is His immense condescension, He allows, He commands me to call Him my own God. What concerns my truest life, my very self, is at present far from perfection ; it is very much 'in the rough,' or even 'all to bits,' as one might say,—and yet I know that He is beholding it from His throne :² He has His own plan and purpose about it ; He wills to bestow on it, somehow and some time, the completeness which at present is sorely wanting."

Many years ago, an English poetess wrote, "And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness."³ Yes, it is incompleteness all around : an aspect of that vanity, or emptiness, or failure, to which, as St. Paul says, the creation has been made subject,⁴ but which is conditioned by a splendid and massive

¹ Newman, "Apologia," p. 59. Cp. "Sermons," i. 20 : "To every one of us there are but two beings in the world, himself and God."

² Ps. cxiii. 5, 6.

³ Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

⁴ Rom. viii. 20.

hope of future deliverance from bondage. If the whole creation groans as in travail, the groans of humanity are the deepest. Human life, looked at in itself, is a thing of "shreds and patches,"—of uneven fragments, which seem incapable of being pieced together; in every part a lack of coherence, an urgent need for the strong and gentle touch of a finishing and consolidating Hand.

Look, for instance, at the bewildering problems of human existence, as seen apart from faith in a real God. Wordsworth, in one of his greatest poems, spoke of

"The heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world."¹

And since he wrote, many have become yet more painfully and even angrily sensitive to its darker shadows, its complex knots, its paths resembling the windings of a maze. They complain that they have lost their way, or they doubt whether there is any way to be found. What does it all mean? If a Providence is at work, why is its face so often veiled? If a good God reigns, why does He allow Himself to be so strangely thwarted? Must we acquiesce in the dreary obscuration of those beliefs and hopes that once made life, even under hard conditions, more than bearable? Was that a "soothing dream," which the dry light of rigorous fact has banished from those whom it has relentlessly and finally awakened?

¹ "Tintern Abbey."

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Pessimism has, no doubt, become somewhat of a fashion: it sounds fine to say that you see through illusions, that you will do without them, and take the hard world as it is: but there are not a few who seriously think that they are driven by facts to this grim "philosophy of despair." And even within the area of the faith, where God is acknowledged as knowable and as known, Christians are disturbed by questions which cannot be answered, by controversies which no explanations, no efforts after mutual understanding, seem capable of abating or bringing to a clear issue. They feel, yes, *we* feel that our knowledge, if real and trustworthy, as far as it goes, is but, as St. Paul says, partial;¹ "now we see through a glass, obscurely." But can we go on with the next words? Well for us, if we can be sure that the Lord will at last, if we are but patient and loyal, perfect that which thus concerns us, that we shall see face to face, when the shadows flee away in the light of the Infinite Vision.

Again, it concerns us still more to have full scope for the activities and affections of our moral nature; for therein is our truer life.² Many pass through this world with no opportunity of developing what is in them. They are cut off at the outset of life, just when they seemed full of richest promise; or they are restricted, even to old age, within a petty and obscure field of action; or, in the sadly ex-

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² See Newman, "Serm.," v. 315 ff.

pressive phrase, they are "laid by" for years with illness; or some haunting infirmity is to them as a thorn in the flesh; or their homes are unhomelike, or made desolate by some bereavement which turns everything black and wintry; or their minds are warped and poisoned by a sense of unkindness or injustice: these are but samples of what have been called "shipwrecked lives," the "failures" of personal history. We look at them with awe and pity, but we can bring them little or no help; we ask what God meant them to be, and why He allows them to be what they are; and we might well be "made to stumble" at phenomena so distressing, if we had not faith to believe that the Eternal Lover of souls may be reserving what thus concerns His poor creatures for a future perfecting that shall vindicate His love. He may, perhaps, even in this world provide them with unthought-of opportunities of service, may open to them fresh springs of interest or affection, raise up new friends to brighten the close of life, sustain their wearied souls with the food of helpful sympathy. And if not here,—well, there is the Hereafter, when the "eyes shall not be dim, and the ears shall hearken," and there shall be compensation for the disappointments, the limitations, the incapacities, of our present condition, which, after all, may have their advantage if they foster in us the great virtue of hope, if they remind us that nothing but God can fill the soul. "Thou shalt show me the path of life, in Thy presence

is the fulness of joy : ” if we are Christians, we know that this span of existence is but the first chapter of a long story, the opening scene of a great drama : if much remains unfinished at death,—

“ Our times are in His hand
Who saith, A whole I planned,”¹

and who best knows how to gather up the fragments, and fashion the isolated parts into completeness and unity.

But even this is not all : this touches not the inmost heart of the case. What concerns us most of all is to be all right with God, to be lifted up out of the slough of moral evil, to have the will entirely conformed to what He wills for us. Look back over past years : we may have started fairly well in the path of Christian living ; but we over-rated our own strength, and under-rated the dreadful energy of sudden temptation, when seconded by the treachery of our own hearts. Those who do so are apt to fall,—by degrees slow at first, faster and faster afterwards ; and how easy then to accommodate one’s standard to the level to which one’s practice has sunk ! People admit sin into the house of their being ; they ask it to sit down while they talk to it ; they are fascinated, captured, too willingly enslaved ; and then ? why, then they want to make themselves comfortable after a lapse of which at first they were ashamed ; and it becomes natural to

¹ Browning, “ Rabbi Ben Ezra.”

think the Christian type of conduct too romantic to be practical, and to acquiesce in the decent worldliness, the amiable self-pleasing, or even the more or less refined sensuality, which to so many around them seems a thing of course, —which has become to themselves too pleasant and familiar to be surrendered. “Yes,” a man will say, “I once thought Christianity workable ; but I have found, and you will find, that for men in the world, for young men among young men, for men of business, for men immersed in secular activities, it won’t do. You had better abandon your ideal : it may be beautiful, it may suit some exceptional natures, but we, you and I, and others like us, must take a different line, and hope that somehow all will be right, even if we have left religion to the clergy who are professionally bound to it, to the imaginative and emotional,” —perhaps they even add, “to the weak creatures who value it as a solace or a prop. For our part, we have outgrown it.” So, in very truth, by act and influence, if not in express terms, men give up the idea of serving Christ. “Ah, but,” you say, “others may do so, but not I.” Yet, assuredly, every sin which we indulge, which we do not cast out when we know that we have harboured it, brings us a step nearer to this practical apostasy. We may come to it sooner than we think : our safety lies in avoiding whatever would impair our sense of sin. Or do we say that past sins are so present in memory, that they exert a sway over us even after we have

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renounced them, and that therefore we despond as to the possibility of shaking off their yoke? This also is, to many, a trouble that may become an occasion of falling. "What is the use of trying to do better? I try and try again, and I am always failing and falling back: evil recollections, associations of thought with by-gone evil, overthrow me when I set myself forward; I lose ground at every step, I shall never make anything of religion." Then comes the fatal conclusion,—“I must even give up the attempt and the hope, and live the life that for me is natural.” Let souls that are listening to that voice, and perhaps thinking it hard that the way of Christian progress should be difficult, remember whence they have fallen, but also remember that they may yet be strengthened to arise. The Lord will even yet, if they give themselves into His hands, perfect that which so intimately concerns them,—will carry on, and carry out, the good work which He began in their souls,¹ and which was interrupted by their own carelessness or perversity. Yes, let us all join in the petition that He will thus take us again in hand; we all require it, each in his own way: to adopt a word which St. Paul was fond of,² we need to be readjusted, reorganized, put into form and order,—to have defects supplied, and gaps filled up. Let us pray, in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews,³—words which are in fact the Biblical model of a collect,—that the

¹ Phil. i. 6.

² *καταρτίζω*.

³ Heb. xiii. 20.

God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, will make us perfect in every good work, to do His will with a whole-hearted fidelity which shall grow onwards and upwards to its full consummation, through the power of that Sovereign Goodness which became for man incarnate in man's Redeemer.

X

The Danger of Relapse

St. Matt. xii. 45 (R. V.): "The last state of that man becometh worse than the first."

MORE than sixty years have elapsed since the appearance of the first volume of a truly unique series of parochial sermons by the greatest preacher, in point of insight, whom Oxford ever saw.¹ It has been said of his sermons that they "entered into all our feelings, ideas, and modes of viewing things" with an astonishing intimacy of apprehension, with a pathetic intensity of sympathy; that "he laid his finger gently, yet powerfully, on some inner place in the hearer's heart, and told him things about himself which he had never known till then."² He thus enabled these hearers, if at all responsive, to see which way they were going, what were their own special temptations

¹ "With so precise and delicate an insight into the subtle and intricate web of human motives."—R. H. Hutton, "Card. Newman," p. 108.

² Mozley and Shairp, quoted by Church, "The Oxford Movement," pp. 122, 124, ed. 1; and see Church, "Occas. Papers," ii. 445 ff.

or weaknesses, their causes of failure and their fashions of self-deceit. And one thing stands out quite prominently in those earliest of Newman's sermons,—his extreme anxiety lest Christianity should be, in a bad sense, "conformed to the age," should undergo, as it were, an attenuating recension. "The Religion of the Day,"—so termed in the title of one of these discourses¹—was a thing which, in his view, as it has been pointedly said, wanted "some iron" infused into it:² smooth, refined, respectable, easy-going, it "halved the Gospel";³ it "dropped one whole side of" the teaching of Christ; it dispensed with holy fear, with "zeal for God's honour," with dread and "hatred of sin"; it took up only those elements of Christianity which were "like a lovely song,"⁴ which could stimulate the feelings, could meet the craving for beauty, could satisfy the standard of good taste. It was not merely that mysterious truths were explained away, and doctrines resolved into transient forms of opinion; it was that, besides this, the ethical requirements of the law of the Spirit of life were softened down into something less strict, less unearthly, less far-reaching. The world had seemed to say, "We will take such parts of Christianity as suit

¹ Newman's "Paroch. Serm.," vol. i. no. 24. The text is Heb. xii. 28, 29. Preached Aug. 26, 1832.

² Shairp, "Aspects of Poetry," p. 450.

³ Newman in "Lyra Apostolica," p. 142. Cf. "Serm.," ii. 288. Hutton describes this as "the mere religion of civilization."—"Card. Newman," p. 111.

⁴ Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

us, or else we will not take it at all." It was so then, he thought: is it not so in some sense now? Surely human nature has not altered: the natural man, in the Apostle's phrase, the man in whom the "spirit" is dormant, is always trying to make his own terms with his God.

And yet there are passages in the Gospels which insist that we shall take Him on His own terms, and face the awful as well as the more attractive aspects of the message which comes from Him who is King as truly as He is Father, with an

"Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too;"¹

and who, even as Father, is an object of awe as well as of love. Jesus, our Lord, our Brother, Saviour, and High Priest, has a severe side to His teaching.² Pleadings for our trust and our affection, entreaties that we will come to Him and take His easy yoke upon us, are combined with warnings the most austere, and commands the most exacting. It is so, eminently, in our text: He is picturing the condition of a human soul whose moral history can be summarized in relapses, whose latter end is worse than the beginning.³ Ah! must it not have cost Him something to utter this tremendous parable, in

¹ Browning.

² "It is strange that any one can be blind to the sternness of Jesus Christ."—Church, "Discipline of Christian Character," p. 90. On the place of Fear in Christianity see Dale's "Lectures on Preaching," p. 212.

³ Cp. 2 Peter ii. 20.

which the imagery is drawn from the weird influence which evil powers were then allowed to exercise over the will and consciousness of some deeply afflicted men, not necessarily "sinners above" the rest? The evil spirit, He says, has been cast out, but returns,—finds his former abode in the man's soul standing open to receive him,—takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. And behind this imagery, and glaring hideously through it, is the phenomenon of relapse after repentance; a soul that seems to have turned from evil to good, to have climbed up well out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and secured its footing on the rock, is seen to slip backwards, to be "again entangled," as St. Peter puts it, in the old pollutions, to rivet anew around itself the chains which had seemed to be smitten asunder. It is this woful possibility of drawing back unto perdition which recurs to the thought of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; even while he dwells with such adoring thankfulness on the sympathy of our all-merciful High Priest, he reiterates his admonitions on the point of falling away.¹

Relapse—we know how this one word pierces with deadly chill the hearts of watchers by a sick-bed. "If he should have a relapse;"—"you must take all possible pains to guard against relapse;"—or, "It is a relapse, and I

¹ Heb. x. 39; iii. 12; vi. 6; with iv. 15.

dare not encourage you now to expect recovery." Which things, belonging to the physical order, may be allegorized¹ in reference to the moral and spiritual. Cases on cases occur in the experience of parents, of friends, of pastors. Here, let us say, is a young soul which had gone very wrong, and then took a turn for the better; which seemed, perhaps, to recall the home-coming of him who had known what it was to feed on husks, and had resolved to return to his father; and "when he was yet a great way off" (how often have those few words helped us!) "his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and bade the servants bring forth the best robe and kill the fatted calf, because he had been dead, and was alive again, he had been lost, and was found." Ah! but that is not the whole of the story in the cases we are thinking of. Suppose that this same parable, which, as it stands, has done more than any other to win back wanderers, had had a mournful second part. The pardoned younger son, after a while, begins to look back to the unhallowed independence which had ended in degradation and starvation. He wearies of the quiet monotony of his home; its pure comforts seem to him vapid; his father's wistful, watchful tenderness, with its silent claim on his grateful affection and loyalty, is felt as a restraint,—and he hates restraint, even in such a form; he hankers after the old excitements of riotous living; he breaks away, he hurries off,

¹ Gal. iv. 24.

along the unforgotten road, to the country all too far off: perhaps a second famine pinches him, but he is too proud to say a second time, "I will arise." No, he hardens his heart,—he stifles compunction,—he "accepts," as he calls it, "his fate": he dies in the callousness of despair. It is all the worse for such a one that he ever went back to his father, with the trembling entreaty of an outcast for some place, below a son's, yet within the shelter of home. His last state is worse incomparably than the first.

Yes, this catastrophe of relapse is repeatedly allowed to close in aggravated misery the drama of many a career once rich in promise, because God will not force free-will. Is it possible that the life-scenes of any one of us may yet have a fifth act so unspeakably tragical? Well, but how to guard against it? First, surely, by making our repentance, by God's grace, as true and solid as possible. It must not be merely saying, "Well, I am sorry, and I will try not to do so again." We must try to turn quite round, with a resolution in which mind and heart and will shall all conjointly energize,—to turn away unreservedly from evil, and also to turn positively towards good. The enemy was able to reinstate himself in what he had come to regard as "his house" because after his temporary expulsion it was, in St. Matthew's phrase, left empty, "at leisure," not preoccupied by worthier inmates. You have got rid, suppose, of some bad habit: the effort was hard,

but at last it was successful; that sort of temptation does seem to have been mastered. But if repose is thus far granted, remember what befell him who was found sitting under the oak, or him who was warming himself at the fire. The conscience becomes more or less drowsy: the will, wearied with recent strain, sinks back into a comfortable torpor; but what is that sound outside the house, of claimants that are finding an entry, that sound that soon echoes through the house from within? . . . Let us be forearmed against such a crisis. Let us fill the vacant space, once crowded by evil habits, with honest endeavours to pray better, to "guard the first springs of thought and will"¹ in the early morning, to use the highest means of grace more faithfully, to govern the tongue and to employ it for good, to lift up the heart, two or three times a day at least, to the Fountain of purity, perseverance, and salvation. If we will only do this, the house will not stand empty, and therefore "garnished" for the reception of old usurpers. And let us not even recall in thought the old occasions of falling. Persons fancy, too often, that they can look back on past evils without risk, as so many facts of bygone experience. They forget that temptations can sham death. They read again, perhaps, words which once had a baleful power over them; they even adventure themselves again within the atmosphere that they once found so infectious. "Curious," they say,

¹ Ken.

“this change in me;—I have got through all that; it is just something to remember, to be added to the stores of one’s experience: it awakens in me now no sympathy, I could even wonder that I ever cared about it: the fire is quite safely raked out. . . .”¹ All at once there is a rush, a sweep as of dark wings, a blast as of poisonous breath; the allurements which they were so calmly analyzing start up with stronger fascination than ever, carry them off their feet, shake their will to its very centre; then comes a fall, heavier than the former. . . . And what if then a voice whispers, “It is done now, you can’t undo it: it is of no use now to struggle against your natural self, and try to assimilate what, for you, will always be conventional: better be real at any rate, live your own life, and ‘chance’ what may ensue”? How persuasive, too often, is that fatal exhortation! The fallen man does not start up and return to the feet of his Redeemer, claiming the promise, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out,” and clinging to Him for present and future protection; but “adds sin to sin,” “does evil with both hands earnestly,” immerses himself more deeply in the mire by way of crushing more absolutely the “little grain of conscience” that is left. . . . And the

¹ There is wonderful knowledge of human nature in those stanzas of Shakespeare’s “*Lucrece*,” in which Tarquin “despises” his passion as “still-slaughtered,” elaborately argues against it, and then suddenly determines for it:

“My will is strong, past reason’s weak removing.”

last state of that man must needs be worse than the first. Or, if he does yet again repent, the fact of such a relapse as he has known will increase tenfold the difficulty of retracing his steps:¹ and if he is saved, it will indeed be "so as by fire."

To sum up: let us beware of what seem small relapses, for in them is the seed of greater ones. To "despise small things," we know, is "to fall by little and little." In the Christian year which is all but ended, what ground have we lost, and not yet properly recovered? Let Advent find us at least endeavouring to recover it. Let us take as a proverb for the ensuing year a homely but most suggestive saying, clearly based on the parable of the evil spirit who was driven out and who re-entered—"The devil goes away when he finds the door shut,"—and let us loyally use the grace which alone can enable us to bar the door fast against his return, and to fill the house with the presence of its rightful Owner. The secret of our difficulty will be found, if we look, in a certain coldness or torpor of the will. So long as there is in us any distaste for an entire union of will with God's will, so long as the prayer for grace is rather a compliance with a felt obligation than the genuine cry of a heart that knows its own "plague," there cannot, of course, be any

¹ "If you will not turn to God now with a warm heart, you will hereafter be obliged to do so—if you do so at all—with a cold heart; which is much harder."—Newman, "Serm.," i. III.

true upward movement. But a great step will be taken if we can *wish to wish* for such a movement; if we can throw ourselves by one sincere appeal for help on Him from whom come all holy desires; if we can say, as really meaning it, "Stir up our wills, O Lord."¹

¹ Perhaps no words in the Lord's Prayer make such a demand on single-mindedness as "Lead us not into temptation"; it is only too possible to say them with half a heart. As to the difficulty that has been often felt, that what they deprecate is a thing not to be supposed possible, the Greek shows that the next words must be reckoned as part of the same petition. God is asked not to do one thing, but on the contrary to do the opposite: thus, to be led or introduced into temptation would be to be *not* "delivered from the evil one" (as R. V. rightly translates), but left without the protection of grace (cp. 1 Cor. x. 13). As to the form here given to the idea of not being thus "left," etc., see above, p. 66.

XI

Comfort of the Scriptures

Rom. xv. 4 (R. V.): "That through patience, and through comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope."

THE Epistle for the Second Sunday in Advent begins with a remarkable illustration of the Apostle's depth and amplitude as a teacher. It is his way, when he is urging some particular part of Christian conduct, to emphasize its importance by using it in illustration of some far-reaching principle. For instance, when he has been exhorting Corinthian Christians to avoid all entertainments which are distinctly associated with idolatrous observances, he clenches the matter by considerations drawn from the august realities of Sacramental communion, and from its bearing on the spiritual life of the Church. So here, he has been urging a certain class of Christians, who deemed themselves "strong" in mind, men of broad views and free from prejudice, to bear with the "infirmity" or petty scrupulosity of minds which they evidently despised as narrow and feeble. We are not to

please ourselves, but to seek the good of our neighbours, what will help to build them up in Christian attainment : "for even Christ pleased not Himself,"—a hint of that supreme example of self-sacrifice on which he dwells with such force and vividness in a passage which we read on Palm Sunday. Christ pleased not Himself : no, on Him were concentrated the insults of those whose sins were, in truth, insults to His Father. "I am warranted," St. Paul says in effect, "in thus adopting the language of a Psalm ; for it belongs to a book, or collection of books, which was written with a view to our instruction." That is, he vindicates against an imperfect estimate the function and dignity of the Old Testament Scriptures. Elsewhere he does this with special reference to their historical elements ; "those things that befell our fathers were written down for our admonition."¹ Here he takes a broader view ; the older Scriptures, for him, form an organized whole, as pervaded by a Divine purpose which gives them a true unity ; in degrees very various, they contribute to the great process of preparing the way for the coming Redeemer, who has come, as we know, in the Person of Christ. Whatever this or that individual writer may have intended, his writing was more or less over-ruled : and in the true spirit of a devout Hebrew, in the spirit, let us rather say, of St. Peter when he tells us that no prophecy ever came by the will of man,²

¹ 1 Cor. x. 11.² 2 Pet. i. 21.

St. Paul neglects the purpose of the human instrument in order to magnify that of the ultimate Inspirer. And he fixes on one special end which the Old Testament was divinely ordained to serve: "that we through patience, and through the comfort derived from the Scriptures, might have hope." Patience and comfort, he adds, are God's own gift; and He is also the God of hope, who can make our belief in Him a fountain of joy and peace, so that we may have an overflow, an abundance of hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this same epistle he had spoken already of patience, as testing the pure gold of Christian character, and thereby supplying fresh stores of a hope that cannot disappoint or put to shame.¹ But here patience is linked with the comfort derived from Scripture. What is comfort? We sometimes treat the word as if it were merely equivalent to consolation—the soothing influence which can wipe away tears or relieve despondency. In the touching words of Keble's poem on St. Barnabas, "the truest wisdom and noblest art," amid a world that is like a sick-room,

"Is his who skills of comfort best,
Whom by the softest step and gentlest tone
Enfeebled spirits own."

But that is not by any means its primary idea. The spirit of comfort is not so much that of a nurse as of an elder and braver comrade; the

¹ See above, p. 58.

word in English is a strong word akin to fortitude, and the Greek original has a heartening, encouraging tone about it—the tone of a voice that calls to us like that of a friend, cheers us on, animates and invigorates, as when the angel in Daniel's vision bids him not to fear, but to be strong.¹ We call the Holy Spirit our Comforter; and although that is not an accurate rendering of the original word, which really means One who can be called to our side as a supporter, it does fairly represent, if we read it aright, the strengthening office of that Divine Friend beside us, whose presence at once commands and enables us to be strong and of a good courage. Comfort involves the renewal of energy, the recovery of lost or impaired force: it sets us again on our feet, it sends us back to our work with a fresh impulse: the very reason for which we are “spoken to comfortably” is that we may rise up and go forth to meet the Lord, when He comes to us in all the might and love of the Ruler and the Shepherd.²

Do not these old Jewish books, as many would call them, minister in this sense to comfort? Let us take an instance or two. It was a true comfort to a troubled psalmist,³ whose faith in God's goodness, in the stability of God's promises, was quivering under protracted trial, to correct his own infirmity by “remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High,” the

¹ Dan. x. 19.

² Isa. xl. 2, 9–11.

³ Ps. lxxvii. 10.

“wonders wrought for His people in old time.” ~~And~~ the story of Jeremiah’s ministry illustrates the strength which can be made perfect in human weakness. A prophet of sensitive disposition, who shrinks from the task that his call sets before him, is filled with a supernatural courage, an immovable persistency which does not change his nature but controls it; to his own surprise, he is able to stand up “like a defenced city and a brazen wall,” in resistance to whole masses of irreligious public opinion.¹ Once more, it was a stay and support to prophets² when the terror of Chaldean invasion was darkening the immediate future, or when the restored people had sunk into selfish apathy and perverse disregard of sacred obligations, to think of that “Holy One,” their life-sustaining Rock, as the same “from everlasting,” to remember and proclaim that if “the sons of Jacob were not consumed, it was because the Lord, the God of their forefathers, changed not.” Israel, it has been said, was “a nation of hope”:³ those who were truest to its ideal were most earnest in looking for its consolation—most sure that the vision would, in its appointed time, speak and not lie, would be embodied in the long-expected Christ.

And if this was so while prophets and righteous men were not made perfect because our time was not yet come,⁴ how much fuller

¹ Jer. i. 18.

² Hab. i. 12; Mal. iii. 6.

³ Luthardt, “Fundamental Truths,” etc., p. 219.

⁴ Heb. xi. 40.

of comfort, and richer in examples of ghostly strength, are the Scriptures of the New Testament! Think of our Lord's question on the first Easter Sunday afternoon: "Was it not incumbent on the Christ to enter into His glory through suffering and death?"¹ And think of the change produced by the power of His Resurrection, on Apostles who had forsaken Him and fled, but within seven weeks from that first Easter were raised up from the prostration of despair to the boldness of heroic confessorship.² Think of John, whose surname was Mark, once turning back from the companionship even of a kinsman, when real danger stared him in the face, but afterwards found serviceable to Paul by faithful attendance in his prison;³ of Timothy, naturally anxious and despondent, but profiting by his interest in the Spirit that was "not of fearfulness," and "made strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus;"⁴ of all the weak hands uplifted, and palsied knees firm-set, by the assurance that "chastening would in time yield peaceable fruit of righteousness" in those that had benefited by its discipline.⁵ "Comfort from the Scrip-

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 26.

² "I admit an allegorical resurrection which proves the real; to wit, a resurrection of Christ's disciples from weakness to resolution, from fear to courage, from despair to hope; of which, for aught I can see, no rational account can be given but the sensible evidence that our Lord was truly, really, and literally risen from the dead."—Berkeley's "Alciphron," vi. 31.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

³ 2 Tim. iv. 11.

⁵ Heb. xii. 11, 12.

tures!" Let us take only two passages and combine them in memory. "In the world," says our Lord, "you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;"¹ and St. Paul, after fully recognizing the darker facts of this life, the troubles under which believers have to groan, while waiting with patience for the object of their hope, first reminds them that "to those who love God, all things work together for good," and then bursts forth into that exultant affirmation that "neither death nor life, nothing present or to come," nothing in the whole range of creation, "will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."² We can thus appreciate the exhortation addressed to St. Chrysostom in his persecutions by a sympathizing brother-bishop: "Be of good comfort, because the Scripture lessons which we read to the people assure us that almost all the saints have been tested by affliction, as the condition of their attaining the reward that is won by patience."³ And what is the principle, the general idea, to which we may refer these topics of Scripture "comfort"? Surely it is the fact—to use a great writer's phrase—that "the stay of the human soul" is "the thought of" a living God. We are made to lean on a strength divine and eternal. "Our hearts require something more permanent and uniform than man can be. . . . Life passes, riches

¹ St. John xvi. 33.

² Rom. viii. 18-39.

³ Innocent I., ap. Sozomen, viii. 26.

fly away, popularity is fickle, the senses decay, friends die. One alone is constant; One alone can be all things to us; One alone can form and possess us."¹ In the prophet's comprehensive words, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, the Rock of ages."²

This is the comfort which can really carry us through life. Not merely consolation in distress, but a spring of active and positive encouragement, which can enable us to "go on from strength to strength, to mount up with wings like eagles." It thus exactly corresponds with the true account of hope as one of the great Christian virtues. (For hope has been worthily called "the energy and effort of faith," a "real act of the will" and moral nature; a refusal "to be cowed and depressed by evil:"³ unlike the mere buoyant exuberance of spirits which belongs to a sanguine disposition, too light-hearted to feel difficulties or understand perils,—it is such a gathering up of all the interior forces in deliberate reliance on God as can elevate, fortify, and inspire. We need it now, in days when some who pass for philosophers, but have given up the true "wisdom," preach a view of life which is hopeless, and which, as it has been well said, can only be met and over-matched by the repression of atheism, whether professed or virtual. The question of hope for man is ultimately the

¹ Newman, "Serm.," v. 313, 317, 326. ² Isa. xxvi. 3.

³ Church, "Advent Sermons," p. 95.

question of a God for man,¹ and indeed of man himself, as a moral and spiritual being.² All that this word comfort truly embraces is thus knit up with the faith in a Divine Restorer of humanity: it is man's interest that we are seeking to promote, when we plead for Christ as his rightful Leader and Lord.

Certainly life can be very hard: nay, it is often, for many souls bought like ours with the precious Blood, a scene of reiterated trouble and pain. We, on whom "the ends of the ages are come," are more alive to its miseries and perplexities than were our fathers, whose outlook was narrower, and whose sensibilities were less keen. Yet in these days, as well as in theirs, God reigns, and Christ intercedes, and the Holy Spirit of counsel and might is ready to prove Himself the Supporter. And Advent should freshen up our hope, for it is a season of joy as well as of awe. Let us prepare for the Birthday festival of our King by learning, and inwardly digesting, or, as we might say, assimilating, some of those Scripture passages which we have found or known to be specially full of "comfort": such psalms, for instance, as the twenty-seventh, the thirty-fourth, the eighty-fifth; such chapters as the fortieth or fifty-fifth of Isaiah, the thirty-first of Jeremiah, the eighteenth of Ezekiel, the fourteenth of Hosea;

¹ See Flint, "Anti-Theistic Theories," p. 294 ff. He contends that "if the present life be all, if there be no God," pessimism is reasonable.

² "On n'est pas homme sans Dieu" (Napoleon?).

or the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, or the fourteenth and seventeenth of St. John's Gospel, or some uplifting strains of the Epistles,¹ or the symbolical descriptions of Heaven in the Revelation. Such words may prove to be just what we want for the work that has to be done before the night cometh; and while we think over them, and try to use their teaching for our learning, let us pray that the holy joy of Christmas, if we are allowed again to take part in it, may be our strength² for the rest of our life's journey.

¹ *E. g.* Rom. viii. 18-39; 1 Cor. i. 3-11; Phil. iv. 4-13; Heb. xii. 1-13; 1 Pet. i. 3-21; 1 John ii. 12-iii. 3.

² Neh. viii. 10.

XII

The Christ of Christmas Divine

St. John i. 1, 14, part (R. V.): "The Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh."

SOME of us may be acquainted with a Christmas-day sermon, preached as far back as 1863 by one who, although still comparatively young, was already exhibiting, in good measure, that rich and kindling eloquence, that luminous doctrinal exactness, that intense perception of spiritual realities, that absorbing devotion to the name and the person of Christ, which were long to place Henry Liddon so high in the select company of preachers with "lips of gold."¹ He drew out, on that occasion, with a force and fulness which impressed his academical audience, the import of the sign that was given to the shepherds. They were to "find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger:" just an infant, tightly swathed after the usual Eastern fashion—so far, nothing out of the way, an every-day sight; but the distinctive feature of it was to consist in the singular

¹ Liddon, "Univ. Sermon," i. 189 ff.

roughness and discomfort of the surroundings: this babe was actually to have no other shelter than a cattle-shed, no fitter cradle than a manger; and yet in Him they were to acknowledge "a Saviour, even Christ the Lord." The contrast between the poverty of what was outward and the majesty of what was inward was shown to be in keeping with the divine order observable in the Christian revelation and the Christian ordinances: the whole fabric of Christianity was of a piece with the very outset of its Author's earthly career. Always the same combination of earthen vessels with an exceeding richness of grace: always the same tests of capacity for assimilating the religion of the Incarnation,—Have you faith enough to transcend the bounds of sensible experience? and have you a heart and will which can recognize in Christ the true ideal of humanity?

And the preacher went on to dwell on the peculiarly homelike aspect of our English Christmas, as remarkably corresponding to this sign of a babe with a mother. It is still, as he said, with us the "most popular" of the great Church festivals: it is bound up with a stereotyped exchange of good wishes, with annual family gatherings, with festive meals and general holiday-making: insomuch that one is apt to speculate as to whether in all this there is not as much of loss as of gain. It is unhappily true beyond possibility of question, that some loss, some drawback, is inevitable: the

secular adjuncts of the season so often crush in upon its original and profoundly solemn substance : it is profaned, as often as it returns, by a strange, one might say a heartless indifference to its religious message on the part of many who keep it, or rather pretend to keep it, while they think as little of Christ as we do of Saxon idols when we speak of "last Wednesday" or "next Friday." And yet one would fain hope that the gain, after all, outweighs the loss : for religion, if she has but a fair chance, can make her own profit of a time which England has all along felt to be, in the words of her great poet, "so hallowed and so gracious";¹ which appeals so persuasively to our oldest and purest affections, which enters the household with the blessing of peace on its lips, and recalls to men of the world the days when they were children, when their mothers first taught them to speak in simple words to the Most High. This "venerable mother-festival," as St. Chrysostom calls it,² is always peculiarly welcome, exceptionally tender in voice and touch : the names which nature itself has made sacred, of mother and child and home, are musical at Christmas as at hardly any other season—musical with undertones deeper and sweeter than those of this world, and potent to lead us on from a sign familiar, or even commonplace, to a thing signified so transcendent in dignity and so inexhaustible in consolation, but at the

¹ "Hamlet," i. i.

² "De Beato Philogonio," 3.

same time so judicial to those who are not morally in touch with it, as *He* is whose manifestations must tend "to death" if not "to life."

It is, we say, a household festival—a solemnity of the Church which is also a benediction for the hearth-stone. Suppose, then, the case of one who comes back to his own home for a Christmas visit, but does not bring back with him the faith which he formerly carried away. Amid the strife of tongues and the chaos of doubts, he has lost his hold on historical and doctrinal Christianity: but he persuades himself that he can retain something like a religion in Theism as cleared of supernaturalism, and of whatever else he has learned to consider as under the ban of physical or of critical science. He is not loth to call this residuum "Christian" in a sense, as retaining that "broadly humanitarian" spirit, that lofty moral enthusiasm, which he considers fairly attributable to the Nazarene teacher and martyr: but beyond this he cannot go. Yet he is unwilling to pain his nearest relatives by avowing his changed convictions, and thereby marring their simple happiness: he will go to church with them as he used to do. Once more, then, he stands among believing worshippers; and old Christmas recollections revive as he looks at the ever-greens and the altar-flowers, and listens to the short lessons from Isaiah and St. Luke, which Handel's genius has embedded in his memory. "Yes," he owns to himself, "this antique faith,

however impossible for modern thinkers, has a certain abiding charm, not wholly due to the associations of pious sentiment; this Gospel legend, however one may account for it, has a unique moral beauty: these dear kind folks are clearly the happier, perhaps even the better, for being able to believe it." The presupposition that, for men like himself, the verdict against its truth is final, begins to lose a little of its power; he thinks it would be interesting, when he has leisure, to look into the Gospels again. But meantime, the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel as he hears them read from the altar, and some other parts of the service, including some of the hymns, are to him like hard bits of rock interrupting a smooth pathway,—actual stones of "offence," inflicting a shock, and causing repulsion: "quite foreign," he thinks, "to the original, affectionate, though credulous attachment to the idealized memory of a noble and self-denying leader. Why cannot Christians be content to admire their Jesus for what is admirable in a good man, instead of weighting his name with icy lumps of dogma, congealed out of the fluid condition of a simple and very natural hero-worship?"

The answer must be quite explicitly given, even at the cost of temporarily checking the return of a soul to the sanctuary of God. For the plain truth is, that Christmas with a merely human Christ for its central object would not, for the Church, be Christmas at all. Are we told that the theology of the Nicene Creed is at such

a moment incongruous and intrusive? On the contrary, it is precisely this theology which makes the time so unlike any other. It has been well said that although our rejoicing at Christmas is child-like, its "foundation is an awful and overpowering fact, the most wonderful event in the course of God's dealings with His creatures, the coming into the world, as the Child of a Virgin Mother, but otherwise under the common conditions of our humanity, of the Everlasting and Almighty Son of God;" so that, as "the history of Christian belief and life never could have been what they have been if He who was 'with us' was not indeed our Lord and our God," so "the Gospel which, as announced by His Church from the first, has made His Incarnation the centre and heart of all teaching, worship, and obedience, must ever refuse to compromise with any view of religion" which assigns to it a place that is less than "paramount and sovereign."¹ A middle course, we may boldly say, is out of the question; this belief is either a pestilent idolatry, or it is that by which Christianity has to live.

A well-known and much-loved hymn for the great Birthday condenses the joy of the festival into a few exultant words,

"Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning;"

but the "greeting," and the gladness that

¹ Church, "Cathedral and University Sermons," p. 43 ff.;
"Pascal and other Sermons," p. 177.

springs forth with it, derive their warmth and intensity from the belief that He who is thus welcomed is "Very God, begotten, not created," the "Word of the Father appearing in flesh," "the King of Angels" stooping to a human nativity.¹ The "greeting," therefore, must be worship: those who render it must say, "Come let us adore Him." Other high strains associated with Christmas services represent exactly the same idea. The hymn which we know as "the Herald Angels" at once awes and uplifts us by its dogmatic insistence on our Saviour's proper Divinity; a noble version of a noble Latin original² enhances "the unchangeable joy of Christmas"³ by dwelling on the identity of the Virgin-born Redeemer with Him who is Alpha and Omega, "of the Father's love begotten," the adorable Lord of all creation; and a graceful modern carol not only represents the Bethlehem scene as a present reality to faith, but connects the doctrine that underlies it with the highest reach of religious affection—

"And love still turns where the Godhead burns,
Hid in flesh from fleshly sight."

It will, perhaps, be said that this is poetry, and that poetry has a proverbial licence. But

¹ The most popular English version of the "Adeste Fideles" obscures the point of "Natum videte Regem angelorum."

² Prudentius, "Corde natus ex Parentis."

³ Miss Yonge, "The Heir of Redclyffe," i. 355.

poetry animated by religious belief, from the Psalms downward, must have solid and definite conviction for its centre; it presupposes that this or that is *true*. And when a worshipper of Christ has put his thoughts and feelings about Him into metrical form, he has still been holding as firmly to a *Credo* as if he were writing a dogmatic treatise. Here then the question comes up: "Why should Christians, either in prose or in verse, pour themselves out, with a kind of sacred pride or high triumphant rejoicing, about a theological proposition which presents undeniable difficulties to the intellect, and has given occasions for such ramifications of controversy, and such an excess of minute definition? In a word, how is the heart interested in such a dogma?"

One reason may be given which should be at least intelligible to those who regard the Catholic doctrine of Christ's Divinity as an extravagant instance of "deification." For us, to hold it is not merely to tax or strain our credence for the acceptance of a mystery as such, or of a belief bound up with primitive Christian traditions, as well as with ecclesiastical authority in councils or the like. It is—to get hold of a final decisive assurance that the Infinite God does infinitely care for man. It is after we have recited, in our Eucharistic confession of faith, the epithets belonging to Jesus as a Son of God in the fullest sense, God begotten of God, and of one substance with the Father, that we are so well able to say

with thankfulness, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate." Look at Bethlehem in the light of this belief, and think what a God the Father of Christ must be. The Holiest, the Mightiest, the Highest is for those who thus believe no longer a God far off. He has really come near to us, and continues to be near to us in the person of One who, being uncreate, is what no angel, not Michael himself, could be, the "adequate image" and "interpreter of the Father." The names of Jesus and Emmanuel might in other cases only record the fact that the Lord was willing to save His people, that God was and would be with them: in this one case, as belonging to a Divine Christ, they expand from affirmations of such grounds of confidence into titles by personal right His own.

Here then, speaking generally, is the true meaning, the true value, of faith in a Saviour who can be trusted absolutely and loved supremely, because He Himself is God. As Mr. Gladstone has said, the Incarnation is "the reunion to God of a nature severed from God by sin"—a reunion through "the process of imparting a new life, with its ordained equipment of gifts and powers."¹ This is why the belief in the Incarnation involves so very much more than acquiescence in an orthodox formula. In clinging to our Christ, we touch the springs of a vast restorative force, and realize our interest in the purifying and renovating influ-

¹ "Gleanings," etc., viii. 90.

ences which could not be stored up for us in any creature, but which form a treasure whereof we may receive in One who is life-giving because He is God the Word.

It would be easy to carry on this thought so as to observe how Catholic Christianity alleviates, though it cannot annul, the pressure of terrible difficulties as to the prevalence of pain and of sin: the "infinite pity" for the "infinite pathos of human life"¹ is emphasized by the sufferings and death of the Only-begotten; and the Father who sent His own Son as a propitiation thereby provided a stupendous remedy for the moral evil which makes shipwreck of so many lives. Or we might consider how strong is the motive power for good effort, and how efficient the principle of all upward moral movement, to be found in One in whom "dwells bodily the fulness of the Godhead," and whose manhood can therefore be a fountain of recreative virtue. When we bend in spirit before the manger of the Holy Nativity, and offer to the Son of Mary that worship which discerns His intrinsic glory through the veil of an inconceivable self-abasement, it is surely most opportune to renew our purposes of thankful and unreserved self-consecration. Let us do so with single-hearted resolution, with humble but well-assured hope. For to be hopeful still, amid the recollection of many past failures, and worse than failures, is a main part of our Christmas duty:

¹ "John Inglesant," p. 74.

we wrong Him whom "we joyfully receive as our Redeemer,"¹ if we question His will to bless, His power to save, as available for us,—even for us, when with penitent hearts we come within the range of their operation. There is no such "because" in the English language as that in the Proper Preface for Christmas day and its octave: and we do but repeat it in substance, though varying it in form, when we recognize in Jesus Christ as "come in flesh" the fact that made it so gloriously possible for His dearest disciple to tell us that "God is love."

¹ Collect for the First Communion of Christmas Day, in the Liturgy of 1549.

XIII

The Character of the Blessed Virgin Mary

St. Luke i. 30 : "And the angel said unto her,
Fear not, Mary : for thou hast found favour with
God."

ON the twenty-fifth of March the Church observes a signally welcome festival, which yearly relieves with its warmth of colour the grey and sombre atmosphere of Lent. Some weeks may still have to pass before we can say, "It is Easter ;" and yet on that day we seem to catch the faint far-off music of Christmas bells. For Lady-day, as we still popularly call it, is in effect what it was formerly called in the Church of France,¹—the day of "the announcement of the Lord, and of His" original "Incarnation : " or, as we may put it, of that one true Immaculate Conception which beseemed a Second Adam who, being free from all human capacity of sinfulness, should be competent to "bear" and to "take away" human sin.

It is well, however, that in our Prayer-book the title of the festival contains the name of

¹ Brev. Paris., "In Annuntiatione et Incarnatione Domini."

“the Blessed Virgin Mary.” That name, indeed, is absent from the ancient collect, as it is from that other not less ancient collect which belongs to the day “commonly called” after her ceremonial and, so to speak, formal Purification. But on both occasions it is opportune to think of her; and we may do well to consider whether we think of her as often as we might, and learn what we ought to learn from the few but instructive indications of her character. We confess in the Creeds that our Lord was “born” or was “incarnate,” of the Virgin Mary; or we thank Him, in our glorious morning canticle, because He “did not shrink¹ from” being so born; but we often seem reluctant, or afraid, to go further: we banish her memory into the background of our religious thought. Why this apparent coldness, this want of interest, this virtual contradiction of her own prophecy that all generations should call her blessed? The answer, of course, is obvious; it is a reaction which was sure to follow from that enormous misuse of her name which has long been dominant, and is ever becoming more daringly “extreme,” in “the unreformed Churches”;² and of which we may say, without overstatement, that if there were no other corruptions of belief or practice in her system, this one would suffice to keep us apart from Rome. Let me use the words of a distinguished Irish theologian: “The most prevalent extravagance of Roman

¹ This, of course, is the sense of “Non horruisti,” etc.

² See Church, “Occas. Papers,” i. 352 ff.; ii. 424 ff.

teaching at the present day is an exaggeration of the honour due to the Blessed Virgin.”¹ But then, on this showing, some honour is due to her: some “reverent regard,” says Bishop Pearson, in view of her “singular privilege,”² and surely also in view of that grace which is better for souls than any dignity,³ and which had begun to work in her before she was told that she should be “overshadowed by the power of the Highest.”⁴ After all, she was, and she is, what our first English service-book called her, the “Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God,” the human instrument through whom the Eternal Word, in His own Divine and changeless personality, “became flesh,” that is, “became Man.” Can we suppose that, because others think of her overmuch, her Son’s will is that we should forget her? He checked her, no doubt, when she interfered, though ever so gently, with the order of His own public work: ⁵ perhaps we may think that He thereby intimated that she was to have no public office with regard to His Church in the future. But surely He still remembers her motherly care of His childhood, the “piercing of her soul” when she stood with St. John beside His cross. “Thou hast found favour with God,” was the testimony of the angel when he hailed her as “high in the love of Heaven,”—if we may

¹ Salmon, “Infallibility of the Church,” p. 193.

² Pearson “On the Creed,” art. 9.

³ St. Luke x. 20.

⁴ St. Luke i. 35.

⁵ St. Matt. xii. 46-48; St. John ii. 4.

follow Milton¹ in his version of what our fathers called "the Salutation" and we may see reason for it, if we combine what we know of her acts and words.

For, first, the call thus addressed to her,—in one sense, "the greatest ever addressed to a human creature,"²—was responded to with an ideal dutifulness. "Behold, I am the Lord's handmaid; be it unto me according to thy word."³ She believes the call to be true, and she places herself unreservedly in God's hands, with a whole-hearted acceptance of whatever trials it might involve. Here is faith in its genuine form, the form which makes it "justifying,"—faith as carried out in moral self-surrender. But she could not have met the crisis of her life in this spirit, if she had not already been accustomed to walk with God. As capacities and opportunities differ widely, so do vocations; and that which came to Mary was single in the history of our race. But the temper in which she met it should be ours, whenever we receive one of those calls which may seem "ordinary," but which, as tokens of an appeal to us from God, are tests of the soul's movement, towards Him or away from Him. If a man, on hearing such a call to some fresh piece or field of work,

¹ "Paradise Lost," xii. 380. *Κεχαριτωμένη* connects itself with *ἐχαρίτωσεν* in Eph. i. 6. The idea is, divine favour or grace placing a soul in a state of acceptance (that favour, of course, being not otiose, but operative in bounty). On grace, see above, p. 14.

² Church, "Human Life," etc., p. 172. ³ St. Luke i. 38.

does not cast about to find possible exemptions,—does not try that fatal plan of sailing away to Tarshish,—but simply says, “Here am I, the Lord’s servant,”—he is following, at whatever distance, in the track of her who was “blessed” because she “believed.”¹

Again, we may learn something from that “Song of the Blessed Virgin” which has been somewhat boldly called “the centre and heart of our evening service.”² It is worded exactly in accordance with the transitional period to which it is assigned,—a period passing out of the Law, and not quite entering on the Gospel.³ Any one can see that it is, to a considerable extent, based on the ancient song of Hannah:⁴ but her phrases are intensified when Mary employs them; we feel sure that the Virgin’s outlook is wider, that she is musing on higher things. The older poem speaks of a humbling of the arrogant, an impoverishing of those that were full, a strengthening of those that had stumbled, a raising up of the poor to thrones of glory: and we instinctively understand it of a triumph of Israel over Philistines. But when Mary sings of princes as cast down, of the proud or overweening as scattered abroad, of the rich as sent away empty, of the humble and meek as exalted, of the hungry as filled with good things,—is she merely assuring herself that her promised Son,

¹ St. Luke i. 45.

² Liddon, “The Magnificat,” p. 5.

³ Mill on “Myth. Interpr. of Gospels,” p. 119.

⁴ 1 Sam. ii. 1 ff.

as reigning over the house of Jacob, will enable His people to shake off the yoke of Rome? Rather, surely, she has her eye on certain principles of the Divine moral administration. The proud, the rich, the princes, are for her the self-confident, whom a prophet had described as the "stout-hearted that were far from righteousness;"¹ the humble and meek are those who fear God, who lean on Him and hunger for His blessings;—on whom, as she has just before said, His mercy would rest from age to age. Is the former type of character extinct? It lives with an evil life in men who set religion aside as, at best, superfluous, or who even resent the very idea of dependence on One above them, either for happiness or for guidance in conduct;—who pretend that "morality is better cared for when theological motives are frankly discarded," and that "social life is healthier when no dream of a next world competes with present interests." So it is, that if we read St. Mary's Song as Christian faith and experience interpret it, her words are filled with a richer significance than at first they seemed to carry;² their warning against a godless self-reliance, their promises to humility, sense of need, obedient trustfulness, remind us of him whom her Son converted by a voice from the excellent glory; she becomes

¹ Isa. xlv. 12.

² In the Magnificat we have "a woman teaching in the Church for ever without usurpation of authority, but with a saintly quietness," etc.—Archbishop Alexander, "Leading Ideas of the Gospels," p. 113.

for us a preacher of faith as responding to grace ; her Magnificat anticipates the essential teaching of St. Paul.

Once more, there are words of St. Luke which illustrate the peculiar seriousness, the solid thoughtfulness, of her serene collected piety. She "carefully preserves," "pondering in her heart," the wondrous report received from the shepherds : and later, she similarly "preserves" the saying of her Son about His primary obligation to the business of His true and heavenly Father.¹ She meditates, she considers, she steeps her mind in the facts which come before her ; she will not be content with vague superficial impressions : she will not skim over this or that point, as if a glance could exhaust its meaning ; to use St. James's vivid phrase, she will "stoop down to look well into it,"²—will take pains, and take time, to master it. The verb which in our versions is rendered "ponder" has a more distinct and suggestive import ; it means to compare one thing with another.³ The Virgin feels that aspects of truth must not be isolated ; she must get hold of the links which connect them, must clearly ascertain their bearing on each other, until they stand out in coherent wholeness. May we not say that here she gives a fruitful hint to students of Christian theology against that cursory impatience, or that self-willed selection of favourite points, which means one-sidedness, and

¹ St. Luke ii. 19, 51.

² James i. 25.

³ Συμβάλλουσα. Bengel ; "partes invicem considerans."

therefore means error? And further let us observe how this mental habit secures her against a peril which besets many when their eyes have been opened to a transporting vision of spiritual realities. Emotion naturally craves for expression, and too often neglects that sober reserve which would keep expression safe; ardent feeling lets itself go, runs to waste in words which become unreal and idle;¹ but she who knew that great things had been done for her puts reason to its right use in the sphere of faith, and also tacitly condemns that fluent but shallow religiousness which "talks too fast"² for what it has realized, and glides down smoothly into the gulf of a profound self-deceit.

Loyal to a Divine call,—thankfully dependent on a Divine all-sufficiency,—devoutly studious of the purport of Divine revelations,—such was the Virgin Mother of Christ our Lord. A certain woman once cried aloud to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee!"³ He answered by a corrective "Yea rather:" but was He then excluding His own parent from the blessedness which belonged rather to character than to privilege? Most heedfully did she hear the word of God, most consistently did she keep it; and while we recognize the august and transcendent position in which she stands alone among the saints, let us seek for grace to profit by an example which perhaps

¹ Newman, "Sermons," v. 34 ff.

² Church, "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 261.

³ St. Luke xi. 28.

we have heretofore too little regarded. Yet there it was before us, individual and distinct, in those few contexts of that tenderest of Gospels, which doubtless owed so much to information derived from her.¹ It meets us still, with its presence of grave beauty ; it speaks to us still, in its tones of gentle emphasis ; and we may best summarize its teaching by giving the fullest interpretation, at every turn of our daily life, to a single utterance from those pure lips, which her adopted son records for us in the fourth Gospel,—“Whatsoever *He* saith unto you, do it.”²

¹ See Bishop Goodwin, “Foundations of the Creed,” p. 113 ; and Gore, “Dissertations,” p. 18. It is difficult to understand how any who believe in the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, can stumble at the Virginal Birth, which will moreover commend itself to all who regard Christ as “the Second Adam.” On the Syriac text of St. Matt. i. 16–25, see Gore, *ib.* p. 192 ff.

² St. John ii. 5.

XIV

Privileges turned into Occasions of Sin

2 Cor. ii. 15, 16 (R. V.): "For we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing: to the one a savour from death unto death; to the other a savour from life unto life."

GEORGE HERBERT, in his "Country Parson," describes this epistle as "full of affections." In it, he says, the Apostle "joys, and is sorry; he grieves, and he glories." It is indeed an intensely *human* document; nature is there, strong, vivid, in one sense passionate; and grace is there, not suppressing nature, but interfused with it. We look into the deep heart of him who, as it was expressed in one of the most pathetic of English sermons, "had a thousand friends, and loved each as his own soul;"¹ it is a heart that can be sorely wounded, but not embittered, by narrowness and suspicion, by ingratitude and even hostility,—that utters its pain by a wistful appeal for fairer and kinder treatment. "Our mouth is open unto you, O

¹ Newman, "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," p. 458.

Corinthians, our heart is enlarged; it is not in us that ye are straitened, but in your own affections; now, by way of return, I speak as even to my children, be ye also enlarged;" open your hearts to me. Withal, there is hot indignation, sometimes venting itself in piercing irony against "false apostles and deceitful workers," who have been undermining his influence during his absence, or denying his claim to be a true apostle, or even casting doubt on his personal integrity. The contest between St. Paul and the Judaizers may seem to us obsolete, but his frequent references to it, in this letter, help us to understand him all the more intimately as a man of flesh and blood: we are brought into veritable contact with his wonderful and intense personality, which, versatile and many-sided as it was, mobile and susceptible beyond any other in the varied roll of Scripture characters, had its central principle of unity in devotion to the cause and work of Christ.

So it is in the remarkable passage which culminates in the text. The Apostle refers to a recent journey from Ephesus to Troas, and from Troas to Philippi. He had started in considerable agitation of mind, after narrowly escaping from an infuriated heathen mob. At Troas he found "a door opened" for his preaching: but he had hoped to "find Titus" with news from Corinth, and Titus was not there. Restless, as he says, with anxiety, he travelled on to Philippi, and there, too, he had

to endure suspense; at last he "was comforted by the coming of Titus," who brought him tidings which, on the whole, were rather hopeful than otherwise: if some of the Corinthians were still unfriendly, and others had shown no repentance for grave sin, there were those who had spoken of him with earnest affection, and whom his former letter had "made sorry after a godly sort." "Thanks be to God," he exclaims: his journeys as Christ's apostle had involved not a little of cross-bearing, but he looks back on them in quite another aspect; his vivid imagination associates them with what he had often heard of but never seen, the grandest spectacle in the world of that age, a Roman general's triumph. "That long victorious pomp, winding down the Sacred Way and through the Forum,"¹ and up to the southern height of the Capitol, is to him an image of the assured success which sooner or later will crown the Apostolic enterprise: he thinks of the train of captives preceding the victor's chariot, and rejoices to rank himself, converted as he had been while a persecutor, among living trophies of his Lord's miraculous grace; he is being "led in triumph"—for so the word should be rendered,—in the atmosphere, so to say, of Christ's presence: and then it occurs to him that as on those great days in Rome the temples beside which the procession passed were all thrown open, and the incense from their altars cast its fragrance far abroad, so

¹ Macaulay, "Lays of Ancient Rome," p. 154.

whenever and wherever he proclaims the glory of Christ, the sweet odour of that name which is like "ointment poured forth" diffuses itself in benediction on "those who are being saved."¹ And they inhale it: on them it acts like the breath of health-giving air; it is an odour—so the words ought to be read—not "of" life, as the Authorized Version has it, but "from" life, unto life; that is, its operation advances from a lower degree of spiritual life to a higher. It finds some men "sons of peace," with a certain amount of true spiritual vitality; and this it works upon, expands, enriches, until "the measure of fulness" is attained. The soul, responding to the sacred influence, goes on from strength to strength, "from faith to faith,"² reaching forth to things that are before it, "supplying,"—in St. Peter's pregnant phrase,³ this and that other spiritual attainment to be "united with" what has already been acquired, as patience with temperance, or love of the brethren with godliness,—a steady and healthful growth, a daily increase "in the grace and knowledge of the Lord."

"But then," the Apostle seems to say, with an awestruck consciousness of the darker side of our moral history, "it is not so always. There are those for whom this selfsame preaching of Christ becomes somehow an occasion of deeper "falling" than could have been encountered in the path on which the great Light had not shone.

¹ Cp. Acts ii. 47; 1 Cor. i. 18.

² Rom. i. 17.

³ 2 Pet. i. 5 ff.

These are “in the way of perishing” or of “being lost,” because the drift of their life runs farther and farther off from God, instead of nearer and nearer to Him. Somewhat later, St. Paul explains their condition by referring it to the influence of “the god of this world” in “blinding their minds” by unbelief, so that the Gospel is for them under a veil;¹ but this is, in truth, the consequence of antecedent moral obliquity. There is in them already a principle of “death”; and the Gospel message has the effect of developing it, of making what was bad worse, what was hard harder; because, instead of responding to the full-voiced appeal of Divine love, they are predisposed against it, and recoil from it impatiently or even angrily, with the instinctive aversion which St. John describes under the image of darkness hating the light.² They do not want such a visitor as Jesus: He has no beauty that they should desire Him; He represents for them no ideal; He would interfere with them; they cannot breathe freely in His presence, and therefore they get out of His way. So indifference too easily becomes enmity, and callousness stiffens into obduracy; and the awful downward progress from spiritual death inchoate to spiritual death consummate is all the more surely accomplished by a continuous rejection of the Word of Life as manifested for sanctification and salvation. And then—if it is carried out instead of being arrested—the doom must needs be spoken: “He that is unrighteous or filthy,

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

² St. John iii. 20.

let him be unrighteous or filthy still ; ” ¹ he must be left to himself. This double-edged effect of the Divine presence, itself traceable to the mystery of creaturely freewill and the law of moral probation, was intimated in parabolic language by Simeon to the Virgin Mother, when he held in his arms the Infant Christ. He adopted the imagery in which Isaiah had set it forth. “ Let the Lord of hosts,” said the prophet, “ be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary ; *but* for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel ; and many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken.” ² “ This Child,” said Simeon, “ is set for the falling and for the rising up of many in Israel ; ” to some He will be a veritable stone of support, to others a stone over which they will stumble to their own grievous harm and loss. This latter consequence was also introduced by our Lord, with significant abruptness, into a comment on that text in the Psalms which described a stone as first set aside by builders and then exalted into a cornerstone : “ He that falleth on this stone shall sustain fracture, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust,” ³ as we might say, will pulverize him,—words which indicate an extremity beyond the case of “ stumbling.” St. Paul even substitutes the words, “ a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence ” for “ a cornerstone, elect, precious,”

¹ Cf. Rev. xxii. 11.

² Isa. viii. 13-15.

³ St. Matt. xxi. 42-44.

when quoting the memorable text in the twenty-eighth of Isaiah ;¹ and St. Peter brings together all three texts, adding the remark that this stumbling is the result of "disobedience"² or spiritual indocility. Do we think it too hard a doctrine that the best of all good things should be capable of such fatal perversion? Let us remember that "wherever God visits, He divides ;"³ His near approach cannot but be a test of character, and, as such, it intensifies the good or the evil in those who come into contact with it. If we are not attracted by Christ's presence, we shall sooner or later be repelled by it ; and the previous condition of our souls and bent of our wills will practically decide which alternative is to be ours.

It is remarkable that as the first of the two holydays in February reminds us of Simeon's warning, so the second enforces it by the terrible case of Judas. For him, a constant intercourse with Jesus might have been a savour from life unto life ; why did it become a savour from death unto death? Because, when he became an apostle, he had in his heart an element of moral decay and corruption. Covetousness was probably checked for a while by the fervour of early discipleship, but it was not striven against nor expelled ; and as novelty wore off, it awoke to fresh activity, and was even fed by that very office of trust, the keeping of the common purse, which ought to have called forth a grateful

¹ Rom. ix. 33.

² 1 Pet. ii. 6.

³ Newman, "Discussions and Arguments," p. 114.

loyalty. And but for that "cunning bosom-sin," it might have been so. There was no fatality for him, any more than for any of us; the "place whither he went," as St. Peter says with a reserve which deepens the horror, was that which he had made so tragically "his own."

We who live in the midst of Christian privileges have need to be on our guard lest we become the worse for them. They are given to make us all the better for such a gift. But if our wills are set against the mind of the All-holy, then, in despite of that will of His which would fain gather us under its wings, our own attitude of opposition will reverse the intended working of His benefits. Unless we are careful to correspond with His intentions, the peril in question will increase as the area of grace around us widens. There is one condition of life in which it is peculiarly aggravated. Those who look forward to Holy Orders,—and also those who are already ordained,—have often been warned of this rock ahead, and should habitually look out for it themselves. There is a grim old proverb which goes straight to the point: "Let the devil into the church, and he will soon be on the high altar!" A great preacher of the French Church in the eighteenth century, himself a pious and earnest bishop, was never weary of reminding his clergy that the routine of sacred occupations, unless it was salted by continuous self-surrender, might confirm them in dryness and insensibility. "Your functions," he says once, "may themselves harden you;" and again,

“ may become profanations ”; if you allow yourselves to become familiar with the holiest things while you neglect to keep up your personal relation to Him who speaks and acts through them, then even the holiest of them all, even the Eucharistic celebration itself, will but minister to apathy and lethargy, and then to a weary “ disgust ” with spiritual duties, and ultimately—he repeats the dreadful word again and again—to that “ hardening ” of which the natural consummation is the hopeless end of a wicked priest.¹

Do any of us think that the picture is overdrawn, either for priests or for lay people who have formed religious habits, who come regularly to church and frequently to Communion? Alas, experience tells us otherwise. It has been truly said, that “ the creed which makes human nature richer and larger makes men at the same time capable of profounder sins ; ”² and that Christianity has made every vice, as well as every virtue, a “ deeper thing.”³ Even if we allow the ritual forms of the Church to become not “ transparent media ” of access to the living Lord, but a sort of enclosure to protect us from the awfulness of conscious intercourse with Him when we prefer to keep aloof, their savour, so to speak, will change its character and its working. Coldness towards God may be “ death ” at an early stage ; but it may grow into positive

¹ Massillon, “ Œuvres,” ii. 241, 292, 328, 367, 402.

² “ Ecce Homo.”

³ Gladstone, “ Studies Subsidiary to Butler’s Works,” p. 80.

dislike, which is "death" at a later; and one symptom of this process is that distaste for prayer which attends on half-repentance. Men have before now begun by avoiding Christ, and have ended by being practically anti-Christian; or they have moodily thought of God as a hard master, and in time, instead of becoming atheists, have more or less assimilated that hostility to His authority and sanctity which characterizes the lost spirits that defy Him while they "tremble," and hate Him while they "believe."

Let us not say, "*I* will never hate Thee in any wise," but rather pray to be kept from entering on a path that might end in that blackness of darkness. Against what temper, then, shall we strive and watch, that the savour of Christ may not become for us deadly? Against the temper which Apostles call unbelief; against whatever can de-spiritualize our minds; against all "works of the flesh," in the comprehensive Pauline use of that term; against formalism, against irreverence, against a vague, hazy, ineffective conception of our Lord's person and character, and of that truth which, He tells us, is a principle of sanctification; against that spirit of false "independence" which may lead us first to ignore His commands, and then to cherish a grudge against Him for imposing them. And let us be well assured that He who "*is*" Himself "Christianity," desires Christianity to be for us what it is for those who are really "in the way of salvation—a savour from life unto life."

XV

Responsibility for Opportunities

St. Luke xix. 42 : "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes."

WE necessarily associate these words, the saddest that our Divine Lord ever spoke, with what is called His triumphal Entry. We think of the deep irony of such a contrast as is exhibited between the exuberant popular welcome, with its apparently thoroughgoing recognition of His Kingship, and

"the secret load
With which His spirit waxeth faint."

It is one of the gains of the Revised Lectionary that this passage is now read as a second lesson on the evening of the Sunday before Easter. That Sunday has never lost in England its traditional name, universal through East and West ; but until a comparatively recent date there was nothing in its Anglican observance to remind us of the procession across Mount

Olivet ; and even now the account of the event, being taken not from St. John, but from one of the first three Evangelists, contains no mention of the "palms." In the ancient Sarum rite, leaves and flowers at any rate, in default of palm-branches, were carried in procession round the church, while anthems hailed "the King of Kings, the Salvation and true Peace of mankind, who came travelling in the greatness of His strength ;" and that hymn rose up which in its lovely English version has become so familiar and dear to English congregations—

"All glory, laud, and honour
To Thee, Redeemer, King."

So they sang, as if the day were purely festal ; and yet with undertones recalling the ominous question which priests and Pharisees had asked even before the day of triumph—"What do we?" and the fatal suggestion of Caiaphas as to the expediency of "one man's death." And then as the words were chanted, "Men of falsehood have compassed me about," "Deliver me, O God, from them that rise up against me," the voice of joy was suddenly hushed ; the Passion, and only the Passion, filled the scene ; the Mass for the day began with verses from the Psalm, "My God, my God," and with the collect which we still use in Holy Week up to Good Friday.

Those who arranged that mediæval service were probably anxious to impress on Christian worshippers the significant rapidity with which

“Crucify Him” followed on “Hosanna”; to remind them also, perhaps, that of those very disciples whose thankfulness “for the mighty works which they had seen” broke forth into irrepressible rejoicing, which the Lord Himself would defend against Pharisaic censoriousness, one was to betray Him, and one was to deny Him, and all the others, save one, were to forsake Him in their terror for their own safety. Such a thought might be most opportune as a check to the emotional self-complacency which would otherwise issue in self-deceit.

But the main lesson of the Entry is contained in the text. Our Lord’s tears, or rather sobs—for the original word implies no less—must have startled and disappointed the disciples who walked beside Him; and the sentence which followed, and was left unfinished under the strain of an incommunicable sorrow, would break in upon the Hosannas as a funeral knell might interrupt a wedding peal. Writers with an eye for landscape have shown us a “ledge of rock,” forming a turning-point on the mountain road, from which the glory of the holy city would be seen to culminate in the Temple as Herod had rebuilt it, and as Josephus likened it to a “snow-covered hill capped here and there with gold;”¹ and so, in a measure, they have helped

¹ Bell. Jud. v. 5. 6: “To strangers approaching from a distance, it appeared like a mountain full of snow. . . On the top it had golden spikes with sharp points.”—Milman renders this—“A mount of snow fretted with golden pinnacles” (“Fall of Jerusalem”).

us to understand how Jesus, looking on His Father's house, for which He had shown such "zealous affection," and which must then have presented to His companions an aspect of inviolable majesty, would gaze at it while foreseeing its impending and inevitable doom. He apostrophizes the city ; there is a strange pathos in the abruptness which omits its name as the words rush from His lips—"If thou hadst but known, in this day, even thou," as the Revised Version has it, "the things that belong unto peace," that is, what makes for thy true interest ; "but now they are hidden from thine eyes." Then comes a summary of the siege, which in less than forty years was to end in so direful a ruin ; and this is followed by words which show how absolutely accordant was this predicted judgment with the moral laws of a Divine administration into which no element of arbitrariness can enter. "All this, simply because thou knewest not the appointed time, the critical moment, at which God was visiting," or more properly, "was inspecting thee" with a final offer of mercy, which thou hast rejected by not receiving Me as the Christ.

But there may be some risk in dwelling overlong on the original purport of our Saviour's lamentation. The setting of the picture is so impressive, the occasion is so dramatic, nay, so tragic, and lends itself so well to graphic word-painting or poetical amplification, that we have need to remind ourselves of our own relation to its teaching. This "saying" of Christ repre-

sents a principle of manifold application, of universal and perpetual validity—the principle of responsibility for opportunities of good. So read in their whole breadth of meaning, the words speak to a nation, to a Church, to a clergy, to a parish, to a family, to an individual soul, that have had their “occasions,” and have idly neglected to “buy them up,” in the Apostle’s phrase,¹ to utilize and secure them at all costs, and make the most of them while they are present. St. Paul acknowledges that this requires what he calls “wisdom,” a practical moral intelligence, which can look carefully all around and appreciate “the signs of the time,” the value of a particular combination of circumstances which constitutes a spiritual opportunity. But then we know from our Lord Himself that we must unite wisdom with simplicity; and the older Scriptures are pointedly severe on inconsiderateness as merely a form of “folly.” A psalmist “thinks upon God’s ways in the night-season,” and “calls his own ways to remembrance”; a prophet exhorts a selfish and negligent people to “consider their ways,”² to see whither they are going; we cannot, indeed, turn over many pages of the Bible without seeing that they contain texts on which Butler’s penetrating words are an apposite comment. “Neglects from inconsiderateness,” or “want of attention,—not looking about us to see what we have to do,”—may involve a “real immoral depravity,” and be “attended with consequences

¹ Eph. v. 16.

² Hag. i. 5.

as dreadful as any misbehaviour from the most extravagant passion" could produce.¹ / People wreck their lives again and again because they will not take the trouble to understand their own interest, to listen to the voice "behind them," when it says, "This is the way." Or, to borrow a stern sentence of Carlyle's: "Of each man nature asks daily in mild voice, but with a terrible significance, Knowest thou the meaning of this day—what thou canst do to-day, wisely attempt to do?"² But for the abstraction "nature," let us substitute the living God. It is this "visitation," this opportunity, that we are so apt to ignore, because to consider it duly, and therefore to secure it, requires an effort, and might interfere with something that in our childish waywardness we like better. It is easy to see this experience "writ large" in the history of great public bodies. One cannot help thinking that if France in the eighteenth century had been ruled by other hands than those of Louis XV. and his favourites, the horrors which followed on the outbreak of the Revolution might have been averted; or one regrets the utter failure of efforts made by great Councils to reform the abuses of the Latin Church in the century before the Reformation; or one speculates as to what might have been the effect of fervour and sympathy on the part of our own Church-authorities in places and periods that witnessed the development of Dis-

¹ "Analogy," part i. c. 2; part ii. c. 6.

² "Past and Present," p. 6.

sent. The same line of thought might be pursued in regard to privileged orders neglectful of public duty : to schools of learning that reposed lazily on their past ; to professions or other great interests that selfishly resisted beneficial change ; to village districts where stubborn insensibility made faithful pastors think, at the end of a long ministry, that they had "spent their strength for nought and in vain." But again, let us be on our guard against an impersonal view of this disheartening phenomenon ; instead of moralizing on the profligacy of rulers, the blindness of aristocracies, the lukewarmness of priests, the cultured indolence of scholars, the jealous obstructiveness of corporations, or the dull indifference of rustics, let us turn the full light of the Lord's words on our own selves severally and singly. What am *I* doing? Am I neglecting a golden occasion? Am I ignoring a time of visitation, and forgetting that opportunities are given to be used? Miserable indeed it is to see how eager men are to look out for, and seize, and appropriate some opportunity for evil, so that, in Shakespeare's phrase, though it is "so bad, such numbers seek for it,"¹ and treat what religion calls temptations as "opportunities," as "natural openings" to indulgence in what religion condemns ;² while men who profess to respect her authority have to be aroused as out of a heavy slumber, and exhorted and entreated to take cognizance of what makes for their peace while yet there is time, to open

¹ "Lucrece," 876 ff.

² Mozley, "Sermons Parochial and Occasional," p. 17.

the door while the Lord still stands and knocks. It is for want of the habit of waiting for Him, and looking out for intimations of His presence, that so many opportunities pass by and are reckoned up—*pereunt, et imputantur*. A crisis in one's interior history comes on with but little warning: we ought to have been watching for it, preparing to use it; but we were taking our ease, under "the oak," or beside "the fire," anywhere but at our post of observation. If Pilate had been faithful to such light as he had, he would not have been so utterly unready, on that awful Friday morning, to meet the decisive moment of his career. We are contentedly absorbed in the trivial and the commonplace; we do not like to be disturbed; all at once the trial is upon us; we have immediately to choose our course, and we are not sufficiently awakened in spirit to discern what is involved in the alternative. We "do not see that it very much matters"; if a misgiving stirs within us, we stifle it as overstrained and morbid. It may be a question of yielding or not yielding to some pleasant social influence, which would draw us persuasively into dangerous ground; of drifting into, or turning away from, a stream of circumstances which would bear us on to a moral Niagara; or we get the chance of helping a brother's soul, of saying a word in season to some one younger than ourselves, and we are shy and awkward about attempting it, and the moment hurries by, and the word is not said, and the young soul does not get the help which ought to have been conveyed through our

instrumentality, and something goes down on that subject in the books which will one day be opened. This was a visitation fraught with gracious possibilities, and we did not respond to it; others probably may come, for God is unspeakably patient and "rich in mercy," but that special one, most likely, never again. And we can never reckon on a number of future opportunities; we know not whether we have not exhausted the series provided for us; and at any rate they will come to an end some day, for they are points in our probation, and probation as such is finite. When we find out, too late, that we have "missed our accepted hour," it will be vain to plead, "I did not think about it;" we shall be dumb when in turn we are asked, "And why did you *not* think?" Indeed we shall have to think some time, and it will be a dismal thought on a death-bed that we have been deaf to so many calls, and have wilfully lost so many opportunities. But still we have one here before us, in the solemn services of this week; let us at least secure *it*; if we have failed to "know" so many of its predecessors, let us "put our face in the dust," and say to Him that wept for His own nation's indifference to its own "peace," that we are heartily sorry and ashamed of our repeated neglects, that we can but appeal once again to His immense love for the power of understanding the warnings which He gives us, and of rising up in good earnest to the obligations which they involve.

XVI

Christ not Received

St. John v. 40: "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."

THE pity of it! the pity, and the shame of it, that words so full of a more than human pathos should have been wrung from the lips of this world's Redeemer, by the sheer impenetrable hardness of souls which neither understood their need of His help, nor the supreme momentousness of their one opportunity! "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life;" or rather, "You have no wish to come to Me;" or again, "You do not choose to come to Me:" even as He said, a year later, in the parable of the pounds, "They sent envoys after Him," saying, "We do not choose that this man shall be king over us." It is the voice of deliberate, defiant resistance, expressing itself in absolute terms, as if it had a sovereign right to refuse and gainsay: "This is our answer to the claim which He makes; it suffices that such is our will."

And St. John, speaking of the Jewish people

as a whole, and summarizing their treatment of "the true Light which lighteneth every man," but which offered itself, in the Person of the Incarnate, first to the race in which He had humanly been born, says, with that reserve and simplicity that condenses, and just indicates, intense feeling, "He came to His own land," or "to His own places, and His own people received Him not."¹ And why not?

True, the answer to this question is partly given beforehand in the records of Jewish murmuring, provocation, persistent contumacy, repeated falling back. Over and over again, those who boasted of being "Israel," who hated the children of Edom, and professed to abhor the profaneness of Esau, did themselves despise their sacred birthright; they were "rebellious from the day that their great lawgiver knew them;"² they could not appreciate their own high privileges: when God offered them of His best, they had no taste for it: they preferred a Saul, himself a representative of their carnal faithlessness, to the King divine and invisible. They drew from His servants, who could speak in His name, the pathetic remonstrances which issued from such a depth of love: "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate;"³ "how shall I give thee up, Ephraim?"⁴ "why will ye die, O house of Israel?"⁵

It was consistent, then, we may say, that the

¹ St. John i. 11.

² Deut. ix. 24.

³ Jer. xlv. 4.

⁴ Hos. xi. 8.

⁵ Ezek. xviii. 31.

Jews in our Lord's time should practically "bear witness that they approved of the acts of their fathers;"¹ that they should reject Him whom the Father "sent to bless them";² that they should, in St. Paul's stern phrase, "thrust away the word of God from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life."³

But, as we all know, there were special causes to account for this tremendous act of spiritual suicide. It is an old story. Independently of that blank and sheer apostasy from the treasured hope of the fathers, which led their chief priests to say, "We have no king but Cæsar,"⁴ the people, as a whole, were looking, as we say, for a purely temporal Christ, and were utterly disgusted with One who in all points diverged from that standard. "*He* our Messiah? *He* the king who should reign and prosper, and break in pieces the heathen, and exalt the horn of the people of God? Not *He*, indeed—this son of the carpenter, this Galilean, this leader of fishermen—yes, and this friend of publicans and sinners, who violates the Sabbath, who excuses His followers from fasting, who lets moral outcasts kiss His feet! The rulers and the Pharisees have seen through Him, and pronounced Him an impostor, one who is possessed by, or who is in league with, evil spirits. He will not answer our challenge, or stand the test, when we ask Him to show us a sign from Heaven: how indeed could He obtain

¹ St. Luke xi. 48.
Acts xiii. 46.

² Acts iii. 26.
⁴ St. John xix. 15.

such a guarantee of His mission from above, when He has the blasphemous insolence to talk of forgiving sins, and to call Himself God's own Son?"

Perhaps, when we feel piously indignant at their stupid and criminal perverseness, we do not allow enough for the shock which He had given to their ideals. Natures like theirs, intensely set on a great political object, hungering and thirsting, not for righteousness, but for national independence, looking this way and that for some escape from the bondage to the Gentile, would catch at the news of a movement whose watchword was "the kingdom of God." They would cry out in fierce joy, "At last, then, at last, the hour is come, and the man—the man will be a sacred counterpart, and more than a counterpart, of the heathen Alexanders and Cæsars: he will give us our day of vengeance, will set up the throne of David to receive the homage of humbled Rome. Let us rally round his banner."

Some time passes, and more is heard of the Son of Mary: "He does not seem, after all, to answer our expectations; in place of a battle-cry, he gives mere sermons; he will not, he says, interfere in secular questions; he will not even be an arbiter in a dispute about an inheritance. He hides himself when eager crowds seem ready to make him a King; he certainly will not *do*; he cannot possibly be the Christ; we have wasted our hopes on him."

And then, disappointment turning savage,

they lend themselves to the deadly plot of their Sadducean authorities, and terrorize even Pilate by "requesting with loud voices" that the "agitator" and the "misleader" may be crucified.

So St. Peter, in his great Pentecostal speech, frankly laid the responsibility for Christ's death on the men of Israel, as having used the agency of "lawless" or Gentile "hands," although in a later address he admits "ignorance" as to some extent an excuse for his "brethren" and their rulers. Israel, as a whole, did really reject Christ, did really kill the Author of life; His blood was really on "all the people."

It is obvious to remark that the popular conception of the Christ had become debased: the political aspect, so to say, had absorbed the moral and spiritual.¹ The Jewish readers of Scripture had fastened on descriptions which suited them, and passed over—with a one-sidedness which should not too much surprise *us*—other language, which would have kept

¹ Liddon, "Bampton Lectures," p. 94; De Pressensé, "Jésus-Christ," p. 101 ff.; Milman, "Hist. of Christianity," i. 81. So Row, "The Jesus of the Evangelists," p. 180: "The conceptions of the Messiah gradually grew more temporal, carnal, and exclusive, until they terminated in a Bar-Chochobas." "It has been remarked that even the Apostles came to the Passover feast with swords under their cloaks:" Preb. Harry Jones, "The Son of Man," p. 7. So in "Good Words" for 1890, p. 358: "Christ gave men truth when they wanted temporal glory. They wanted to be avenged on their enemies, and He gave them scope for repentance. They sought a man after their own heart, and He gave them God."

the balance straight, and secured completeness of view, but for which they had no liking.

There were such passages in the Psalms and in the Prophets: as it has been well said,¹ the chief point in the Psalmist's idea of a Divine Kingdom is its "moral purpose," its "appeal to wills, affections, consciences." The Prophetical pictures had vividly set forth its essential quality of righteousness, love, and purity; the actual sufferings of prophets had illustrated the deepest and fullest import of that "bearing of griefs," that "wounding" for other "transgressions," that "offering up of a righteous soul for sin," which was to be the condition of future "exaltation" and kingship for the perfect Servant of the Most High;—by shutting their eyes to this, and acting in self-produced blindness, they made, we say, a flagrant and tragical mistake.

But—

"our loathing were but lost
On dead men's crimes, and Jews' perversities."²

Are we so sure that, had we been in their place, we should not have been partakers in their sin? What led them so far astray was no mere peculiarity of their blood: it was something of which (to apply a phrase of John Keble's) "we ought to know a good deal;" it can work, under new forms, in the souls of modern Englishmen, just as truly as in that infatuated

¹ Dean Church, "Advent Sermons," p. 39 ff.

² See "Christian Year," Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

multitude which surged and howled, as at this season, before Pilate's palace-gate. For even now, some of us who have had what the Jews could not have, a training under Christian influences, "do not choose to come to" Christ as a personal Master, as one who can give them spiritual life in its fulness. An eminent theologian and practical teacher, who did not belong to the English Church, but whose death inflicted a grave loss on English Christianity, repeatedly uses in one of his books a phrase full of awful significance: "until Christ's authority," he says, "is obeyed in the affairs of earth, we are in active *revolt against Him*; if a man does not believe in the Sermon on the Mount, as containing the laws which must govern his own life, he is in revolt against Christ:" and "wherever there is revolt against Christ, there is confusion, misery, and shame."¹ And this spirit of "revolt" may, in part, be fostered by impatience of authority as such: personal government, in things civil, is of the past; the word "master" is out of keeping with business relations, and even parents² too often resign their household rule in the hope of at least retaining a senior's influence. Loyalty to an unseen Lord is, so far, harder in an atmosphere charged with democratic

¹ Dale, "Laws of Christ for Common Life," pp. 114, 215, 272.

² "We have attempted to build up our homes without the pillar of discipline, and the attempt is a complete failure."—"Good Words" for 1892, p. 287.

ideas; but, as the same writer has added,¹ this unwillingness to obey recoils not merely from the special claims of Christ; it is God Himself whose rights are practically ignored: the principle of self-will asserts itself against that infinite sovereignty, to "serve" which, if men would but know it, is their truest dignity and "freedom."

And again, as with the Jews an earthly set of aims and hopes intruded into the religious area, and vulgarized their whole idea of the coming Prince, so too, in our day, when, as Mr. Gladstone has said,² "it is the great world-power, within us and around us, which gives to scepticism the chief part of its breadth and its impetus," men are often tempted to secularize the Gospel of the grace of God, to minimize its mysterious or supernatural elements, to strip away what they call its dogmatic and sacramental "accretions," to substitute philanthropic effort in the interest of "the toilers,"—excellent in its way,—for distinctly religious work, to reduce the Church's office to "an expression of the upward-looking aspect of national life," to imagine that Christ will be more easily accepted if exhibited as a pattern of human sympathy, or even as a patron of popular aspirations, and so to reverse the predicted process by turning the kingdom of God into a kingdom of this world.

But is this all? Would that it were all!

¹ Dale, "Laws of Christ," etc., p. 282.

² "Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," p. 288.

We may be orthodox Christians, regular church-goers, communicants, observers of holy seasons; and yet, some wilfulness as to a favourite sin, some worldliness obscuring our perception of things invisible, may alienate us effectually from Christ. We may acquire a fatal dexterity in dispensing ourselves from one or other of His laws, and thence go on to cherish a kind of resentment against it, as too austere and exacting, until we come very near the dire extremity of "contempt for His word and commandment." Or a secular leaven, with its "vicious agitation," may corrupt our inner sphere of aim and motive, until we accept unchristian standards of action as alone practicable for us, dismiss the Gospel-ethics into the region of poetic ideals, look down on piety with a superciliousness soon hardening into aversion, and plan out our lives as if God were well out of the way. Do we say, God forbid? May He, indeed, forbid it! But let us make it possible for Him to do so; and with that end in view, let us cultivate a tenderness of conscience which may quicken our dread of sin, and such a sense of our own need as may carry us more quickly to the Incarnate Source of grace. Let us be more than ever on our guard against compromises between religion and worldliness, which would make us, in St. James's phrase, "men of two souls," double-minded, and therefore in our Lord's eyes hypocrites. And let us turn with fresh earnestness to the study of His life in the

Gospels; that by filling our minds with the vision of its beauty, we may come to know Him as the Lifegiver, and cling to Him as Saviour, Lord, and God. Let us be well assured that He does really desire us to come to Him; and let us beg Him to accept and confirm the resolution which the thought of His Cross may fitly prompt—"We *will* have this Jesus, God and Man, to reign over us, through life and in eternity."

XVII

Christ's Last Discourse

St. John xvi. 33 : " These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

WHAT an evening was this in the spiritual history of the world ! Every year, as its shadow falls again over us, our coldness is rebuked by its inexpressible pathos, our shallowness by its immense significance for all who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And we are of their number. We confess Him, we trust Him, we adore Him ; and yet, in the routine of a comfortable life, it costs us a real effort to assimilate the full teaching of Maundy Thursday.

The night of the great Eucharistic Institution—the night of the New Commandment, of the last Discourse, of the Intercessory Prayer,—the night of the mysterious Agony,—the night of the beginning of the Passion,—is surely a night to be much observed unto the Lord. Well, let us try now to observe it : and what shall we think of by way of concentrating our ideas ?

Let us look at the great Discourse itself: it may, perhaps, be opportune to gather up a few of the main lessons contained in these chapters,—the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of what was once called the “spiritual Gospel,” which at this point, it has been well said, admits us into the very “Holy of Holies” of Christianity.

First, then, we may observe how true is the remark which has been made, that this long address of our Sovereign Teacher is “thickly set with mysteries, as if with emeralds.” The hearers are lifted up into an atmosphere of peace, but of peace which brings deep awe.

Amid a scene which to Jewish eyes, accustomed to the Paschal observances, would seem externally quite familiar, while the Apostles are reclining beside a table on the couches with which the “large upper room” had been duly “furnished,” the voice which spake as never man spake begins to pour out the abundance of a heart that, having loved its own that were in the world, could not but long for their love, could not but feel, if we may say so, some relief that the solitary traitor had gone out into the night, and that only those remained who, if still lacking in spiritual intelligence, if soon to give sad evidence of weakness, were yet in intention loyal.

“When he was gone out, Jesus said”—what? Something not simple and obvious, but rather especially profound. He speaks of a “glory” as attaching to Himself, the Son of

man, and in Him to God His Father. His relation to the Father, which had never for a moment ceased to exist under the veil of His humanity, is now repeatedly and significantly emphasized. "If ye had known Me, ye would have known My Father also: from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. We—the Father and I—will come unto him that keepeth My word, and make our abode with Him. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name,—the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father,—will testify of Me. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father."

Sometimes, we know, the hearers interrupted Him, as if He were speaking of things quite above their reach, as if every utterance raised some new difficulty. "Show us the Father;—we know not whither Thou goest;—how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" A door, so to speak, had been opened into that heaven which, in truth, "lay all about" them: they were blinded by the light which streamed in upon them,—blinded, that is, at first. By degrees they began to see more clearly; like him who "saw men as trees walking," they became accustomed to the new and resplendent atmosphere: at the end of His discourse they could say, "Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and we believe that Thou camest forth from God."

But the point for us to consider and profit by is, that when our Lord would give the deepest moral instruction, the most effective spiritual comfort, His words were inevitably theological : He could not but speak of things pre-eminently heavenly ; He could not but link His teaching on their future work, and on the spirit in which they were to meet its requirements, with transcendent revelations as to the interior life, the ineffable "coinherent" love and fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the Holy and undivided Trinity. In this, as in other instances, He illustrates the moral and spiritual fruitfulness of that creed which is imbedded in His Gospel, and which is the expression of Himself as the Truth.

But again, the discourse is one long utterance, pathetic in its fervour and its energy, of our Redeemer's intense love, yearning over the souls which He has drawn to Himself. Presently He will entreat the Father not indeed to take them out of the world, but to keep them, while within it, from being "of" it, from falling under the power of the evil one. He is going away from them : He is to be with them, visibly, but a little while longer : whither He goes, they cannot come—as yet. And certainly they will feel the wrench of such a parting : that cannot be helped. Moreover, besides their inevitable sorrow, they will have positive "tribulation in the world," that is to say, amid a mass of minds which the Holy Spirit will convict of sin, because they believe not on

the rightful Lord of all men. "The world," in this sense, will hate them: no wonder, He says, "it has hated Me before it hated you, and I chose you" as to be taken out of the range of its influence. Men will actually persuade themselves that to kill the servants of Jesus is to offer acceptable service to God. This is the prospect before them: and He who could be touched with the feeling of all human infirmities is too true a comforter to understate facts; the very plainness of His warnings brings out the perfection of His sympathy. He would fain enclose them within a fortress of strong consolation, built up out of the assurance that His own love and care for them cannot fail. Will they not believe in Him, as they believe in God? Can they not take His word for it, that it is expedient for them that He should go away? He goes to prepare a place for them: that very purpose of His implies that He will come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He is, they may be also. But even before that final and perfect reunion they will have in Him such peace as the world can neither give nor take away; yes, and this peace will expand into true joy, a joy akin to His own, because it is the joy of unselfish love.

And further yet, He promises to send them another "Paraclete." What does this word imply? "Comforter" is a rendering endeared to many sacred recollections, and it expresses one side of the Paraclete's office; but if we wish to translate correctly, we must employ

such a term as Advocate, Supporter, or Patron. The word is not active in form, but passive ; it means one who is called in, called to a man's side, in order to espouse and plead his cause, to befriend and aid him. In the first Epistle of St. John it is rendered literally : " We have an Advocate with the Father ; " but the general idea of the term, as used of the Holy Spirit, will cover the whole ground of our Lord's previous relation to His disciples ; and that was a relation of support, always accessible and available ; He had been, in a word, a perfect and all-sufficing Patron. Now He was going away, and the Holy Spirit would be given them as their Patron. But here a caution may be necessary ; as it has been tersely said, " the Holy Ghost comes, that Christ may come in His coming. . . He does not take the place of Christ in the soul, but secures that place to Christ." ¹ In other words, the Spirit's presence is not given us to make up for an absent Christ ; it is rather to secure to the faithful an effective spiritual presence of the Christ who, though invisible, will be not less, but even more truly with them ; with whom they will have closer and more endearing intercourse, by faith, than sight or touch, in this world, could carry on. Still more particularly, the Holy Spirit's office in this respect is to unite us to our Lord's life-giving humanity. ² From the first He had been in close relation to that humanity ; through

¹ Newman, " Sermons," vi. 126.

² Wilberforce on " The Incarnation," p. 193 ff.

His "overshadowing" it had come into existence, and during the earthly ministry of the Virgin-born Christ the Spirit was given to Him, as man, "not by measure," but in plenitude. It was, then, appropriate that after the exaltation of Christ's humanity the Holy Spirit should preside over all our contact with it as members of His body spiritual. This agency of the Holy Spirit, who will testify of Jesus and convict the world of sin, will enable the disciples of Jesus to fulfil, in their own sphere, an illuminative ministry; for, says our Lord, "He will take of Mine, and show it unto you: will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you: He will guide you into all the truth." It was said of old, pointedly and helpfully, "The operations of the Holy Trinity are inseparable;" and so here we see how closely the work of the Spirit interlaces with the work of the Son; what a mistake it would be to fancy that the one operation followed on the other; how cheering and sustaining is the conviction that we have at one and the same time a complete interest in both,—have our access unto the Father through Christ, in one Spirit, as the "vital element" of that access,¹ and are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Lord" and also "in the Spirit."

And yet once more. Our Saviour's love for us is developed and illustrated by the beautiful allegory of the true Vine, the Vine, that is, in

¹ Bp. Ellicott on Eph. ii. 18.

which alone is fully realized the idea belonging to that image. St. John, as we all know, does not tell us of the institution of Sacraments ; but the ideas which underlie them are precisely those which give significance to the discourses in two of his chapters, and which assuredly may be "read between the lines" of the fifteenth. "I am the Vine," said Jesus, "ye are the branches." They must have thought, as they listened, of the Cup which He had so recently consecrated, and given to them as establishing the New Covenant in His Blood. What conception are we to form as to His relation to those who are called branches belonging to, and inhering in, Himself, the Vine-stock?

Is it not exactly the same which St. Paul sets forth under the image of members of a body, which, as he says, is supplied with all its needs, and knit together, by dependence on its head, and as having nourishment supplied from the head?¹ It is the doctrine of our Lord's life-giving Headship : as Second Adam, He is the fountain of a new and purified spiritual life : we are to be mysteriously incorporated into Him,—not merely to look at Him from a distance, as a pattern for moral imitation, but to be really attached to Him by an act of His own grace, and then and thenceforward to draw from His fulness the spiritual force, the grace corresponding to, or following upon grace,² which we need for the health of our souls. And surely it is in the light of His own Holy Eucharist,—

¹ Eph. iv. 16 ; Col. ii. 19.

² St. John i. 16.

it is after a faithful reception of the Sacrament of spiritual and Divine incorporation,—that we best appreciate the truth of our position as branches in Christ the living Vine. Do we not, in returning from God's house after Holy Communion, feel more than ever how hopeless it would be to bear fruit, spiritually, apart from Christ? Are we not then more sensible than ever of the responsibility laid on us by so unspeakable a gift, that we be not branches bearing no fruit, fit only to be cast out and to be withered? Does not the whole mystery of the Christian life, as "in Christ" and "from Christ," unfold itself when, fresh from the partaking of the "holy bread of eternal life and the cup of everlasting salvation," we pray to be "fulfilled with heavenly benediction," or give thanks for the food which is to preserve us as "very members incorporate in His mystical body"?

We are now looking forward to the chief Communion of the whole Christian year. Let us remember that in the discourse which we have been thinking of, there are six repeated promises to prayer, contained in three pairs of successive verses.¹ They are all to the same effect,—that whatsoever we ask of the Father in the Son's name, He will give it,—yes, the Son Himself will do it for us. Our duty, then, and our happiness, is to treat these promises as absolutely trustworthy, and, relying on the word that cannot fail, to ask in view of that highest privilege, the good use of which alone can give

¹ St. John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 7, 11; xvi. 23, 24.

us a happy Easter. But what shall we ask? Let us pray for a strong and vivid sense of the supernatural realities of the Gospel ; for that "faith in the Son of God," crucified and risen, which "overcomes the world"; for power to know something more of that "love of Christ which passeth human knowledge," and for the will to make a better return to it, by a thorough and practical consecration of our own lives ; and, lastly, for the grace which can sustain us in vital union with Him our life-giving Head, so that "our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us."¹

¹ On the doctrine of Christ's Headship (as the Second Adam) see Hooker, v. 56. 6-9 ; Wilberforce on "The Incarnation," p. 199 ff. ; Döllinger, "First Age of the Church," E. T. pp. 184, 188, 236. In Eph. iv. 15, 16, Col. ii. 19, the "joints," or "junctures," and "ligaments" for "supply" of nourishment, and for "compacting" of the body (the Church), are not "the different members of the body in their relation one to another" (Lightfoot on Col. ii. 19), but the divinely provided "means" of that grace which is life, and that fellowship which is unity.

XVIII

The Efficacy of Christ's Death

Romans v. 8 (R.V.): "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

ST. PAUL is the most sympathetic, the most self-adapting, of Christian teachers. He does indeed "become all things to all men, that he may by all means save some." He is ever solicitous to carry his hearers or readers along with him; he builds on what they already know, he appeals to whatever is true in their existing beliefs; if those beliefs are pagan, they still include some germs of truth, and on these the Apostle puts his finger. The simple folk at Lystra are addressed as at least capable of being thankful for rain and fruitful seasons; a wistful inscription on a Greek altar, a lofty half-line of a Greek poet, are used to lead the cultured Athenians to a more spiritual conception of "the God who made the world." So, when he is dealing with Christians, he can take up "trustworthy sayings" current among them, can insert into his own argument a fragment of a Christian

hymn, or of a Christian confession of faith, in which the sacred facts which constitute what he calls his "gospel" are tersely summarized. And this is probably the case with some brief, pointed, emphatic assertions which again and again in his letters attribute a special efficacy to one event, which then evidently, as now confessedly, was the central point in the thought of Christians. That event is the death of Jesus Christ. "Christ died for us," says the Apostle: "our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us;" "the brother for whom Christ died;" "One died for all;" "the Son of God who gave Himself up for me." Thus far, what His death achieved for us is not specified; but one seems to see clearly that it was something great, and that no other death would have been thus beneficial. But elsewhere St. Paul goes a step further: "Christ died for our sins," "gave Himself for our sins," "was delivered up for our offences." A similar saying appears in St. Peter's first Epistle—"Christ suffered for us;" "Christ suffered for sins once."

Now we know how much a very few words may contain,—what amplitude of meaning can be found in two or three syllables by those who understand the speaker or writer. It has been said that as Scripture has been characterized by "simplicity and depth," so, "as if from a feeling that no words can be worthy of" the divine things of which it treats, it often uses the plainest language available: "the deeper the thought, the plainer the word."¹ God is exalted

¹ Newman, "Discussions and Arguments," p. 174.

above all praise, and also above all definition: "Sums of Theology" will fall short when they speak of Him; and His children even find a pleasure in the contrast between the simplicity of the terms which they use, and the majesty of the ideas which all terms can but just indicate. We have got an idea, and we purposely put it into a homely dress: we like to think how vast and august it is; in its presence, we feel, all words are practically alike. Children repeat what we call the Apostles' Creed; they do not know what masses of doctrine are concentrated in the one monosyllable "God,"—what tremendous facts are represented by that other monosyllable "Sins"; and *we* know how far those words spread out beyond the reach of our own comprehension.¹ So we can see how the first Christians, when they said to each other, "Christ died for us," or "for our sins," would realize the bond of a common belief, which those formulas, familiar to them as "household words," would indicate and call into activity. And what was that belief?

The New Testament, as a whole, is pervaded by a certain idea—"the infinite worth," to borrow a phrase from Hooker,² of the Passion of the Son of God in the human nature which for us He had assumed. That idea was deep-set in the mind of the Apostolic Church, although as yet questions about its full significance had not arisen: it was, however, set forth in the New

¹ See "Christian Year," Catechism.

² "Eccl. Pol.," v. 52. 3.

Testament under distinct yet closely cohering aspects, which thus illustrate that variety in unity which pertains to "the multiform wisdom of God."

Archbishop Trench, like others, has pointed out "three grand circles of images, by aid of which Scripture" enables us to "approach the central truth from different quarters."¹ They are—Reconciliation, or peacemaking; Propitiation by sacrifice; Redemption, or deliverance by a ransom.

The first of these gives us the old English sense of "atonement," as Shakespeare frequently uses it and the verb "atone" for setting at one again parties previously opposed to each other.² St. Paul, it is true, speaks of men as "having been reconciled to God through the death of His Son," or urges them to accept such reconciliation as having been effected "in Christ" by God; he does not expressly invert the order of these terms, as if God had also to be reconciled to man; but in the context he implies that God had had something against us, and that now, if we are in Christ, He does not "reckon up to us our trespasses," inasmuch as "He made One who knew not sin to be sin on our behalf."³ Secondly, St. John twice calls our Lord Himself

¹ "On New Testament Synonyms," ii. 120.

² Cf. "King Richard III.," i. 3; "King Richard II.," i. 1; "Cymbeline," i. 5. Clarendon calls the pacification with the Scots "this wonderful atonement."—"Hist. Reb.," vol. i. p. 194, ed. 1819. See Acts vii. 26.

³ Cf. 2 Cor. v. 18-21.

a "propitiation for sins," and St. Paul applies to Him a term of similar significance, usually translated in the same manner.¹ We are told that He "gave Himself for us as a sacrifice;" that He "offered up Himself for all," so that He was both "High Priest" and Victim; that He "offered Himself, as without blemish, to God;" that He "offered one sacrifice for sins as perpetually available"² by "the offering of His body once for all;" that He was "once offered to bear the sins of many;" that He "bore our sins in His body on the tree;" and the latter phrase is akin to the expression incorporated into our most solemn worship, the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And thirdly, the illustration from ransoming is expressly adopted in Christ's own assertion that "the Son of Man came to give His life, a ransom in place of many;" and it passed on into Apostolic language, as where St. Paul says, that "Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom in exchange for all;"³ and elsewhere he identifies "our redemption" with "the for-

¹ If ἰλαστήριον in Rom. iii. 28 is to be rendered "mercy-seat" (as in LXX.), it will mean that in Christ, as a sacrifice, is the sphere of propitiation, and this is emphasized by the words "in His blood." See Gifford, *in loc.* ("Speaker's Comm."), and Liddon "On Romans," p. 75.

² The recurrence in Heb. x. 14 of εἰς τὸ διηνεκές in connexion with "one offering" favours this interpretation of ver. 12, in spite of the consideration of rhythm, which might join it to ἐκάθισεν.

³ The ἀντὶ in St. Matt. xx. 28 is represented by ἀντίλυτρον in 1 Tim. ii. 6.

givenness of our sins ;” and in the same sense the writer to the Hebrews speaks of His “having obtained (for us) eternal redemption,” and of His death as “having taken place for the redemption of transgressions.” This image takes another form in that of purchase, which is used in St. Paul’s address at Miletus, and in one of the Apocalyptic hymns, in which the living creatures and the elders adore the Lamb “as having been slain.” And each one of the three illustrations is connected with the efficacy of Christ’s blood. For instance, it is “through the blood of His Cross that all things have been reconciled to the Father, and that peace has been made.” Sacrificial language is used by Christ Himself in significant connexion with the institution of the Holy Eucharist : “This is My body which is given for you, My blood which is shed for many unto remission of sins.” It is in this relation that we read of His blood as “cleansing or washing from sin,” or as the means of our “justification” or acquittal,—which is further explained by what immediately follows, “we shall be saved from the wrath (of God) through Him.”¹ So again, redemption or purchase is, as we have seen, repeatedly described as effected by means of His blood. And now, what are we to say of this manifold language of Scripture ?

¹ In Rom. v. 9, justification is a past event, salvation a future ; but the two are closely related. In the next verse the “life” of Christ, in which we hope to be “saved,” is His glorified mediatorial life in heaven.

First of all, let us see what we must *not* say of it; let us avoid using it as it was not meant to be used. It is sad to think of the mistakes which good and learned men have made by pressing one or other of these illustrations beyond all reasonable limit, as if any notions attached to its ordinary use were equally applicable to it when brought, so to speak, into the service of the Christian sanctuary, and employed to light up some one aspect of a vast mysterious truth into which, we may believe, "angels desire to look" with fuller and yet fuller intelligence. For instance, certain Fathers of the Church,¹ instead of remembering that in the Old Testament God is said to "redeem" His people when He "delivers" them by some great display of power,² took hold of the idea of redemption with a crude literalism that produced abhorrent results: they imagined that Christ's blood was an equivalent paid over to the devil, in order to cancel his claim of dominion over mankind. In later times, men have spoken as if they thought that the Father had to be persuaded by the Son to lay aside a personal resentment against sinners, in consideration of the Son's voluntary sufferings and death; as if the Father's will pointed simply to justice, and the Son's simply to mercy, a notion contradictory to the doctrine of "one substance"; as if St. Paul had

¹ Gregory Nazianzen, however, calls this notion "outrageous."—Orat. xlv. 22.

² E. g. Ps. xxv. 22; Isa. lxiii. 9; Mic. vi. 4.

not said in the text, that in Christ's death God was "recommending" to us His own love as a thing to be welcomed and valued; as if St. John had not repeatedly encouraged us to find the supreme proof of that love for us, or for the world, in the fact that God "gave" or "sent" His only-begotten Son.¹ Again, the Scriptural insistence on Christ's blood has been misused by neglecting to bring forward the moral essence of His self-oblation, as the act of a will in perfect union with the will of the Godhead.² Or language borrowed from legal proceedings or from commercial transactions has been unreservedly taken over into the theology of the Cross. Or the sense of justice has been shocked by language which seemed to represent the Crucified as an innocent man *arbitrarily* substituted for all his guilty fellows.³ Or lastly, the effect of the Passion in "cleansing us from the guilt of sin" has been too much separated from its dependent effect of cleansing us from the "power"; as if we merely needed to be let off penalties, instead of needing also to "be redeemed from all iniquity," and to have our consciences "purged from dead works to serve the living God."

It "goes without saying" that these per-

¹ Hymns are sometimes faulty in this respect.

² Cf. Heb. x. 5 ff., quoting Ps. xl. 6 ff.

³ The term "substitution" cannot be absolutely discarded without impairing the idea of "vicariousness"; but it needs to be carefully explained so as to exclude "arbitrariness," and to safeguard Christ's representative office as "Second Adam" and our incorporation into Him.

versions of the doctrine have been, and still are, grave stumbling-blocks. They have given occasion to indignant attacks on it, as morally offensive, and injurious to the Divine character. And, by a not unnatural recoil, men zealous for the honour of God's justice and goodness, and anxious to remove "difficulties" which keep others aloof from Christ, have gone into the opposite extreme by explaining away parts of the Scripture teaching, and virtually "surrendering truths which belong to" its "very essence."¹ We hear, for instance, glosses put on "the blood of Christ," as if it meant the moral influence of His spotless life on earth; whereas the New Testament use of the phrase points clearly to that great act of self-surrender to death which consummated the whole course of His obedience.² We find the term "vicarious," in connexion with that death, put aside or even rejected; whereas if we are to interpret Scripture without forcing or twisting it, we must own that it regards Christ as having, in some true sense, stood in our place, and done on our behalf what we could not have done for ourselves. Because it is necessary to disclaim any real separation of those Divine "attributes," as for convenience we call them,

¹ Bishop Ellicott, "Salutary Doctrine," p. 75.

² For the purpose of atonement, the death must not, so to speak, be merged in the life; there is a sense in which it stands by itself. See Liddon's "Life of Pusey," i. 407, for an interesting conversation between Newman and W. J. Irons, at Christ Church, in 1837; and Liddon's "Passiontide Sermons," p. 40.

which, in fact, do but constitute One Perfection, we are told that to speak of "the claims of justice and mercy" as reconciled in the Passion suggests a wholly incorrect idea. Because Apostolic writers, addressing Jewish Christians, naturally refer to the sacrifices of the Old Covenant as finding their antitype in the death of Jesus, these references are treated as mere accommodations to a temporary condition of thought, as not embodying any correspondent truth to be held fast by the Church throughout the ages. And a theory has become popular which reduces the significance of Christ's death to its power of impressive appeal; as if, by so dying, He was pleading not so much with God on behalf of men as with men on behalf of God; so that, in very shame for their own past, and in thankful response to His vast self-devotion, they might be moved to atone for themselves by returning to that Father, who through Him asked them, "Why will ye die?" On this hypothesis, it is, to say the least, very difficult to account for or to justify the language of Scripture writers when the death of Christ is their theme; its moral persuasiveness is occasionally recognized,¹ but they are far enough from treating this effect of it as primary,—that place is filled by another idea. Again, the theory cannot but destroy the uniqueness of Christ's atoning work; for if He was merely giving up His life in order to touch hearts by a miracle of sympathy, He

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14, 20.

was but doing perfectly what other holy men, inspired with the Divine pity for wandering souls, might "dare" to do more or less imperfectly; and strict consistency of thought might come to see in Him no more than the noblest of martyrs. Once more, those who feel unable to ascribe what has been called an "objective effect" to Christ's death are wont to lay stress on the mysteriousness of the Atonement; but on this "impressionist" theory there is no mystery about it, beyond what any view of an operation on human wills might fairly be said to involve.

In short, the phrases of Scripture on this great subject are not thrown about at random; they are the covering of true ideas, which may perhaps be best apprehended in connexion with the illustrations above referred to. For there is something on man's part—he being what he is—which is a standing offence against the eternal moral law; and that something is sin. And God cannot tolerate sin as such; for this law is not a mere invention of His will, it is the expression of His character. His love for man, therefore, is hindered in its outflow while this offence exists, and simple repentance cannot remove the obstacle. What can remove it? Apparently, some Divine act which shall at the same time vindicate the law.¹ Then take the idea which underlies "propitiation"; clear away from that term all gross, heathenish, or demoralizing associations, and you leave the

¹ Cf. Dale "On the Atonement," p. 391.

effect of an intervention on the part of One who, having become truly yet sinlessly man, is still immutably and effectively God—therefore competent, as no mere saint could be competent, to represent the eternal righteousness, when in the manhood which He has assumed, He endures death as sin's original penalty, and before dying, submits, for some awful moments, to a sense of being "forsaken," as One on whom the sins of the world were "laid." And then the term "redemption" brings home to our minds the moral glory of this true "sacrifice." Think, it says, what a rescue has been effected for you—and at what a cost!

It would be rash indeed,—it would be worse,—to pretend that any such suggestions can fully elucidate the atoning effect of the Passion. It remains true that "the heavenly truth revealed in it extends on each side of it into an unknown world,"¹ as in other mysteries of the Gospel. We cannot say that it makes the Divine justice, as therein exhibited, "*perfectly* intelligible": how should it? Yet, as God ⁷ always works by some law, we may say that the very "question, 'Why could not the effects attributed to Christ's death have been secured at less cost?' is itself a conclusive proof that conformity to some laws deeply seated in the very nature of things is the underlying difficulty" in the matter.² And then we may, at least, keep hold of the three points just mentioned:

¹ "Tracts for the Times," No. 73, p. 12.

² The Duke of Argyll, "Philosophy of Belief," p. 351.

sin, in its true character, so often underestimated by modern thought;¹ the law of eternal righteousness, which, as far as we can see, it befits the supreme Moral Ruler to uphold; and the Divine personality of Christ, which could impart its own virtue to all that He did or suffered as man, and qualify Him at once to represent us as the Second Adam, and to save us as God's co-essential Son. All

Christian experience bears witness to the power of this faith in His Divinity as accounting for the efficacy of His human death; and a hearty belief in it will be found richer in moral incentive than any theory which slurs over the belief itself, or neglects to take due account of its consequences. The glorious hymn which concludes with a recognition of the claims of "love so amazing" has already appreciated their immensity by confessing the Crucified One as "God."²

¹ Gladstone, "Gleanings," viii. 114.

² The objection, "Why could not God simply forgive sin on repentance?" implies that sin is merely a personal affront to Him, instead of being a violation of His moral law,—a crude notion, and scarcely a "moral" one. On the "mysteriousness" of sin, and therefore of forgiveness, see Mozley, "Paroch. Serm.," p. 133.

XIX

Eternal Life

Ps. xvi. 11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy: at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Joy is ranked by St. Paul as second among the fruits of the Spirit. He means, of course, what elsewhere he calls joy "in God," or "in the Lord," or "of the Holy Ghost," or "in believing"; such joy as can be linked with "faith" or with "supplication";—in a word, religious joy, the sense of being "refreshed, enlivened, stimulated, invigorated"¹ by a real belief in the Gospel, and by the felt presence of Divine love as brought home to us in Jesus Christ. The Apostle evidently regards this kind of joy as a primary quality in Christian character. He would not admit that a man could be vitally a Christian without it. He feels it "overflowing" within him amid all his own "affliction"; he delights to record of the Macedonian churches that their experience in this matter was like his,—that "their joy overflowed when affliction

¹ Newman, "Serm.," vii. 180.

sorely tried them.”¹ He exhorts Christians to “rejoice in the Lord alway :” he cannot help reiterating the exhortation—“again I say, rejoice.” And St. John is exactly of the same mind : he writes his first Epistle in order to promote this holy joy ; he tells a friend that he has “no greater joy than to hear of his children as walking in the truth ;” and doubtless he had always in mind what he had heard his Lord say on the eve of the Passion : “Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

In short, the New Testament, by thus consecrating religious joy, has lifted it to a high place both as a privilege and as a duty. And the early Christians took this teaching to their hearts. It has been well said, that one marked characteristic of their life, as we see it sketched or fully portrayed in primitive Church records, “is the intense joy, hope, and enthusiasm by which it is animated.” Amid a “disappointed world, in which suicide had come to be looked upon as a natural and reasonable resource, the humblest Christians and the most distinguished alike display all the energy of hope, of love, and of the complete satisfaction of their hearts. . . . They have found true joys ; their hearts are fixed on them.”² Even persecution itself, in all or any of its manifold forms, is unable to “take away their joy :” in a very true sense its effect is to enhance it, to make them

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 4 ; viii. 2.

² Wace, “Bampton Lectures,” p. 149.

thank God on hearing the sentence of death, as we might thank Him for some extraordinary piece of happiness, such as the unexpected restoration of a loved one from an illness which had seemed to put hope out of the question.

Yes, we *should* thank Him then ; our hearts would be "enlarged," and we should begin to understand some passages of the Psalter which heretofore had seemed too rapturous to be really intelligible : their exuberance of delight in acts of worship, in the intercourse of the psalmist's soul with his God, had been, to speak honestly, somewhat of a puzzle ; we could not appreciate, still less assimilate it. But the ancient servants of God felt this joy not only, nor chiefly, on occasions of personal deliverance, but habitually, because He was what He was, because they belonged to Him. And this abiding satisfaction, this gladness constituting a settled condition of mind, was enriched, expanded, and confirmed when inherited by the first believers, to whom the joy of the Lord was doubly and trebly a strength, when they knew that Lord as incarnate in their Saviour.

It is certain, it needs no proof, that the joy which radiated from the Apostles to their converts, and became traditional and indefeasible in the primitive Church, took account of, and was fed and sustained by, the present condition of redeemed man, as able to live even his ordinary human life "in the faith which rested on the Son of God, who had loved him and had

given Himself for him." "I am a Christian," each believer would say; and we know from one pathetic and glorious record of martyrdom, that to repeat those words in the midst of torture was for a poor weak female slave a resource which "gave refreshment and even abated the sense of pain."¹ It was enough to fill souls with "an awful rejoicing transport" when they realized that "the appearance of Divine goodness in human form" had opened a new "possibility of becoming better."² But the more that Christianity—say rather, that Christ—had done for human nature in this world, the fuller was the assurance that He would do yet more for it hereafter. We rightly say that eternal life begins even here, in the transformation of characters by grace; even here, those who cling to Christ "have" that life *while* they cling to Him; but the very splendour and amplitude of His present gifts make it all the more impossible that He should not keep in store something immeasurably more excellent. That free quotation of a prophet's saying as to what eye had not seen nor ear heard, which St. Paul makes in his first letter to the Corinthians,³ appears to refer directly to what we call "the state of grace"; but we all feel that it is far more applicable to the yet unimaginable "state of glory." And it is clear beyond need of proof, that the spiritual joy of the earliest Christians

¹ Blandina, in Euseb., v. i.

² Church, "Gifts of Civilization," pp. 183-185.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

and their immediate successors took in both, and, having begun in the consciousness of redemption, and of incorporation into Christ, was perfected in the expectation of beatitude, that is, of life eternal as developed and secured beyond all peril of forfeiture, in that heavenly sanctuary where to be once admitted is to "go out thence no more,"¹ but to be for ever with Christ. This, of course, would be pre-eminently the case in the observance of the highest of Christian festivals. Joy is the keynote of Easter worship, but joy as passing beyond the thought of present blessings to those which the Resurrection of Christ guarantees to His servants in the future. The "Paschal joy," of which so much is said in the old services for the day and the season, has special regard to the fact that when our Lord overcame death, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

It is a great thing to be able to end the recitation of the Creed, in either of its forms, with belief in eternal life in this its fullest sense, in the life of the world to come. Do we really and solidly apprehend this article of the faith? Is our acceptance of it morally effective? Do we always get quite beyond the lines of a working theory, a speculation which we wish to think well founded, a vague pleasure in dwelling on hopes which we know to have sweetened many pure lives and brightened many enviable deaths? Do we not sometimes feel half-constrained to agree with the poor father in the

¹ Rev. iii. 12.

story, who, when his dying daughter talks to him of what she will enjoy in heaven, mutters sadly, "I'm none so sure o' that; but it's a comfort to thee?"¹ Why cannot we rejoice in the "hope of eternal life," as "promised by God who cannot lie"? Why does not this promise make our own present existence better worth having?

No doubt there are difficulties for us, which were much less felt by our fathers. There are influences which act like a spell on various minds in various circumstances, by way of shaking this "great hope of humanity, which reason built"² up to a certain point, and which revelation, as centred in the Risen Christ, has raised to a height so majestic, and invested with attractions so endearing. For instance, there are the terrible things of this life, its crushing burdens, its sickening anxieties, its irremediable pains, its appalling contrasts of fortune and of opportunity. They excite in some natures a sort of resentment against the offer of a future heaven by way of compensation for exclusion from earthly good. Men exclaim passionately, "We will not be diverted from our plans for amending this world by pictures of a possible but unverifiable hereafter, which you priests would dangle before the suffering masses in order to keep them quiet and docile." Or there are the rush and grind of life's never-slackening business, absorbing all interest on week-days, often also on Sundays, until a soul

¹ Mrs. Gaskell's "North and South," p. 69.

² Mozley, "Univ. Sermon," p. 69.

for which Christ was born, and died, and rose again, becomes all too like that crowded inn at Bethlehem, and its idea of future happiness, if not destroyed outright, is impoverished by being de-spiritualized; or people talk vaguely of "a happy release," and "a better place," and of "going to heaven," as if heaven were sure to be secured by the mere process of dying—as if it *would* be heaven to souls that had lived here without God. As Keble asks in a very characteristic poem¹—

"What is the heaven we idly dream?
The self-deceiver's dreary theme,"

made up of coarse material elements,

"Poor fragments all of this low earth,"—

fragments that had never received the Redeemer's transforming benediction.

We need, then, to freshen up and to purify our conceptions of the life of the world to come, by conforming them to the standard of Scripture. But here comes in a class of difficulties which profess to arise out of Scripture language. There are those who say in effect, "If I am to believe both in heaven and in hell, I can believe in neither." They misinterpret what Scripture says about the awful condition of the lost, because they do not see that it describes no merely penal requital of past sin, but the inevitable recognition of sin that has become permanent. Eternal death, as it is sometimes

¹ "Christian Year," Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

called, is not caused by a mere act of Divine legislation, like a statute made by despotic power; it is in strict truth the perpetuity of the state of separation from God which the sinner has freely chosen for himself in this world,¹ and to which he obstinately adheres. There can be no "perdition" where there is not this obduracy. Or others carp at the imagery in the Revelation: they say, "This symbolism is not to my taste: foundations of jewels, gates of pearl, a street of pure gold, do not at all come home to me or 'find' me; and as for an eternity simply spent in singing hymns, I confess that a never-ending choral service is not my notion of man's supreme and final good." Surely this cavil is somewhat prosaic, not to say stupid. The Apostle, writing in the first instance for Easterns, heaps together picture-words which would best shadow forth to the Eastern mind the idea of an infinite wealth of glory, an intense, continuous, transporting consciousness of the "beatific sight" of the Most Holy, which will raise worship to its highest and brightest activity, and verify that lofty definition of the end of man's existence, "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever."

But these things, we may feel, are at present too high for us. Let us think of what we can better realize: the description of heavenly blessedness in the last two chapters of the Apocalypse begins with the promise that God

¹ See "Life of Pusey," iv. 351.

will swallow up death in victory, and wipe away every tear from the eyes of His redeemed—as if the cause of every single tear were distinctively present to Him: “and death shall be no more, neither mourning, nor wailing, nor pain any more,”—never again, never at all for those who have really taken Him for their God. Here indeed is what we can all understand; and from this assurance of an unspeakable relief we can manage to rise a little higher: “a God who will put an end to grief and pain, and destroy the last enemy,—what is there that He cannot or will not do for the benefit of those who are to dwell with Him eternally?” Yes, *eternally*: and if the idea of a literally interminable existence is utterly confounding, or, when we do get a glimpse of it, subduing and overawing, still it is just what was involved in the world-old hope of immortality. Should we really be content to have annihilation postponed for so many thousands of years or ages, with the certainty that death awaited us at their close? No, we should deliberately desire to be exempt from death altogether: and if such exemption is at present too vast for our imagination, we can wait until, in the higher world of the future, our faculties are strengthened to take it in.

Or again, personally, what will the saved *do* in heaven? what will be their employments and interests? And then comes in the promise, His servants “shall do Him service,” they will always be serving Him;—somehow, knowledge

perfected into comprehension, affections centred on their supreme Object, will unfold new powers, and open new spheres of blissful activity. What form such activity will take is a question which it is idle to put, for doubtless we could not now understand the answer. We may leave all that in the hands of our Father; and at the same time may take a hint from the old story of the monk who harassed himself about the question, "What if weariness should enter *there*?" and who after a long trance passed away with one only dread—

"Lest an eternity should not suffice
To take the measure and the breadth and height
Of what there is reserved in Paradise,
Its ever-new delight."¹

Three things, perhaps, we may learn, with very substantial comfort, from St. John's picture of the Celestial City. The various gems in the twelve foundations may represent to us the diversities of natural disposition or faculty which will live on in the redeemed, but as cleared from all evil tendency. Each of those who then see God will be beautiful with the full development of the special excellence which he was intended to display. The name of "city" assures us that heaven will be a scene of social or corporate happiness;—that all the precious bonds which have drawn souls together here will be renewed and made fast before the Throne. And yet again, the vast size of the

¹ Trench's "Poems," i. 22 ff.

city encourages the inference drawn from earlier passages about multitudes that no man could number, the hope that those who walk in the light of God will far outnumber those who must be left to the "unrighteousness" or "filthiness" which they have persistently preferred to His purity, holiness, and love.¹ And lastly,—a fitting thought to conclude with,—the central Figure in the scene is the Person of the Crucified on the throne: the city itself is His spouse, and He Himself is its lamp.

Let us say to ourselves, "What am I doing by way of fitting myself for this blessedness? He still invites us to come near Him, and so to live that at last we may enter in through those gates into that city." Let us put ourselves by a loyal self-committal into those holy and tender hands which can keep our feet from stumbling in our pilgrimage, and if we "still hold closely to Him," can bring us at last into that sacred Presence, wherein is the fulness of an imperishable joy.

¹ Dr. Pusey wrote in 1880 that he "strongly hoped that the great mass of mankind would be saved," but "could have no *belief* on the subject." See "Life of Pusey," iv. 353.

XX

Belief and Action

St. James ii. 26 (R. V.): "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

IF we had now for the first time to select epistles for the Sundays after Easter, we should probably turn to those passages in which the Apostolic writers become eloquent on the glory of their Lord's resurrection, or set forth its "power" as the restorative principle for humanity. And if we were now for the first time made acquainted with that part of the Prayer-book, if we could look at it, so to speak, with fresh eyes, we should be likely enough to feel some disappointment at the absence of that inspiring subject from the series of liturgical Epistles, which, however, is simply an English form of the paragraphs read in the Western Church through many centuries at the Sunday Eucharists of the season. Can we guess at the motive for such a selection? It was probably akin to the thought which imparted to the Easter-day collect its gravely practical tone. We

might have preferred some collect which would "pour out the heart" in purely exultant thankfulness; but it is safer for us, perhaps, to "take with us words" which emphasize the responsibility involved in the joy of "Easter triumph." You must now, says the Church, be conscious of good desires; to be without them on such a day would be to contradict your Christian profession; but remember that you owe them originally to grace, and that you need its continual help to bring them to good effect—that is, to prevent them from leaving you colder than they found you.

There is, then, a profitable significance in the fact, that the Epistles for the fourth and fifth Sundays after Easter are taken from the first chapter of St. James. We know more about this James than about his namesake the brother of St. John, much more than about the son of Alphæus, if he is to be distinguished from that Apostle; we know, to begin with, that he was called "the Lord's brother," although the exact import of that phrase is a matter of question. We cannot take it literally; for, not to say that the general sense of the Church has revolted against the suggestion that the Lord's mother had other children younger than Himself, the fact that in His dying anguish He chose St. John to be her son in His own stead must surely tell "with fatal effect"¹ against the

¹ Bishop Lightfoot's "Dissertations on the Apostolic Age," p. 24. See also his remarks, p. 23, on the "Helvidian" inference from St. Matt. i. 25.

theory in question. Two other views have prevailed respectively in Eastern and Western Christendom: one, which has a good deal of early tradition in its favour, regards the "brethren" as sons of Joseph by a former wife; the other, which was popularized by the great reputation of St. Jerome as a Biblical scholar, supposes them to have been sons of the Virgin's sister, and therefore first-cousins of the Lord. This is not the occasion for going into the details of a question which will probably never be closed; but, in view of the currency recently given to the former theory by the high authority of Bishop Lightfoot, it may be observed, first, that it makes out the so-called brethren of Jesus to have had no real blood-relationship to Himself as "born of the Virgin"; secondly, that it leaves us wondering why, in providing for Mary at the time of His own death, our Lord should have ignored her four step-sons; thirdly,—and this is a crucial point,—that it has to get over the mention of another Mary as mother of James and Joses, and as an actual witness of the Crucifixion.¹ The second theory is not necessarily committed to the assertion

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 56; St. Mark xiv. 40, 47; xv. 6. Bishop Lightfoot has his own way out of this difficulty; he thinks that the "James" here mentioned is some less distinguished James, not "the bishop of Jerusalem, the Lord's brother," so that the "Mary" here mentioned is not the mother of the latter ("Dissert. on Apostolic Age," p. 21). It will follow that "James and Joses" in St. Mark vi. 3 ("Joseph" in St. Matt. xiii. 55) are not the "James and Joses" of the later texts. Surely this is a "violent" suggestion.

that James, "the Lord's brother," or cousin, was identical with the son of Alphæus; but the name of Clopas, the husband, as we may reasonably suppose, of Mary the mother of James, who, according to the natural construction of a passage in St. John's Gospel,¹ was "sister" of St. Mary, has been supposed to be another form of the name which in two Apostolic lists is yet further Grecized as Alphæus; and this identification, if established, may not, as has often been assumed, be inconsistent with St. John's statement, that as late as the last autumn of Christ's earthly life His "brethren" did not believe in Him.² For St. John was just the writer to give to that verb an almost ideal fulness of import; and he might only mean that the "brethren"—among whom James *may* not for that purpose have been included—came short of such a faith as was absolute and thorough.

But whether this James was or was not one of the Twelve, he certainly appears in the Acts and in the Epistle to the Galatians as on a footing of equality with such eminent members of the "glorious company" as Peter and John, with whom he stands forth as a "pillar." The high position which he specially held as the resident chief pastor—not in his own lifetime called the "bishop"—of the mother Church of

¹ If St. John had meant to distinguish "his mother's sister" from "Mary of Clopas," he would naturally have put "and" between them. Cp. St. John xxi. 2.

² St. John vii. 5; and see Dean Scott on the Epistle of St. James in "Speaker's Commentary." Cp. St. John ii. 11.

Jerusalem accounts for the tone which he took in the Council of "Apostles and elders"; and so far as we can trust an account of him given by a Hebrew Christian writer of the second century,¹—who, however, has mixed up with it a good deal of legendary matter—he retained the respect of many religious Jews, who gave him his distinguishing name of "the Just." But naturally he incurred the enmity of the Sadducee Jewish authorities, and closed his career by martyrdom in A.D. 61 or 62.

When we look into the Epistle, we see that even if he was not one of the Twelve, he had been a very attentive hearer of Christ, and in some true sense a "believing" disciple; for he reproduces much of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount,² and no other New Testament writer has so fully assimilated the spirit of the Parables. He has, in fact, something of the poet's eye; his sympathetic glance at this or that outward scene enriches his ethical teaching with illustrations at once various and vivid. The surge of the sea under a gale, the ship obeying the pilot's "impulse," the grass withering when the hot wind touches it, the vapour rising and dispersing, the wells of brackish or sweet water, the farmers longing for rain, the labourers complaining of wages held back—all these sights he has seen and stored up in his memory,

¹ Hegesippus; Euseb., ii. 25.

² Especially of St. Matt. v.; see James i. 2; ii. 10, 13; iii. 8, 18; iv. 8. Other passages will recall St. Matt. vi. 19; vii. 1, 16, 26.

and makes them serve his purpose as a preacher of Christian duty, of religion made real by deeds following on words. What he cannot endure is profession without practice,—sentiment which may be sincere at the moment, but is not consolidated by action,—conviction real as far as it goes, but not allowed to tell on character. The man who listens and “straightway forgets,” who thereby “passes off a fallacy on himself,” the “empty” or shallow-minded man, whose “devotion is vain” or idle, is again and again the object of his censure. And this will enable us to follow his meaning in the remarkable context which disparages mere belief when not completed by acts or deeds. The drift of opinion among modern students has usually tended to date the Epistle very early, so as to exclude all conscious reference on its author’s part to the controversy as to the obligation of Jewish observances on Gentile converts, and still more, therefore, to the contention of St. Paul against Judaizing Christians on the subject of justification. And yet it is hard to suppose that this context could have been written before any question had arisen as to whether a man was to be justified by faith or by works. For the question, “Can faith save” a man who “says he has faith, and has not works?” is plainly asked at the outset; and a very eminent Cambridge scholar, in a posthumously published volume, holds with good reason “that a misuse or misunderstanding of St. Paul’s teaching on the part of others gave rise to St. James’s

carefully guarded language.”¹ It is carefully guarded, if we look into it; and yet we can hardly wonder that it has appeared at first sight to contradict St. Paul. For here are the well-known Pauline terms, “faith,” “works,” and “being justified”; both Paul and James use the verb “justify” in its proper sense of placing a man in a state of acceptance, as opposed to a state of condemnation; but while Paul says that justification takes place “by means of faith, apart from works of law,” James affirms that a man obtains justification “from works, and *not* from faith alone.” The question therefore has arisen—how to “harmonize” these two sacred writers?

If we take account of St. James’s characteristic aim, as zealous above all things for moral consistency and reality, we shall easily see that the opposition is but verbal. The two saints were clearly very different in their antecedents and mental habits, and they were addressing very different classes of readers; but while they use the same terms which we are wont to render “faith and works,” they are putting different senses upon them. What is “faith” with St. Paul? An act of the whole interior being, of the mind accepting Christ as true, the affections responding to His love, the will bowing to His sovereignty. What is he thinking of when he speaks of “works”? Not Christian acts in which faith energizes, but acts, right enough it

¹ Hort, “Judaistic Christianity,” p. 148. See also Salmon, “Introd. to N. T.,” p. 582.

may be in themselves, but done in a legalist spirit, as if so many of them would strictly entitle a man to claim God's favour as wages due. Now turn to St. James. He does once use "faith" for trust in Divine promises,¹ but in the paragraph before us "faith" is pure intellectual credence, first that "God is One," and then, by way of superstructure on that basal Hebrew belief, that "our Lord Jesus Christ" is "the Lord of glory," a phrase, let us observe in passing, by which St. Paul himself had set forth the true Divinity of his Master.²

It would appear that some Hebrew Christians had grievously misapprehended St. Paul's teaching about faith. Perhaps they transferred into their Christian life the Pharisaic temper which "rested" in law as a formulary:³ and having formerly relied on their Jewish creed as a creed, took a similarly stiff and unspiritual estimate of what "belief in our Lord Jesus Christ" should imply. "Faith," in their hands, had shrivelled up into mere orthodoxy. St. James tells them that even demons "believe" in that sense, and that such belief is not nearly sufficient for acceptance; unless it has a moral element which issues in and secures correspondent action, it is simply "ineffective,"—nay, it is "dead." Let action go with credence, and then credence will be complete and living. To say that God justifies or accepts us, as He accepted Abraham, when, but only when, this

¹ James i. 6.

² 1 Cor. ii. 8.

³ Rom. ii. 17.

combination has taken place, is but to say that His acceptance is dependent on moral conditions : and how could it be otherwise with the perfect Moral Being? "Works," therefore, in this sense, deeds congenially growing out of right belief, are just the "exertion" (if we may use a phrase of Bishop Butler's)¹ of that faith which St. Paul treats as the justifying principle, and which he describes as operating through love.

The essential consistency of the two representations will be best exhibited by a change in the translation of the two critical words as St. James uses them. When we read St. Paul's letters to the Romans or Galatians, let us still say "faith and works"; when we read St. James, let us say "belief and acts" or "deeds." In his earliest extant letter, St. Paul speaks of the "work of faith"; in one of his latest, he insists that those who have believed in God must "take care to be forward in good works" or deeds;² in the Epistle to the Romans itself he even says that those who walk after the Spirit fulfil "the righteous claim of the law,"³ and speaks of a "law of the Spirit of life," and again, "a law of faith." Most certainly he would be at one with St. James in warning against self-deceit and double-mindedness; the second chapter to the Romans is proof enough of that. And if it is asked, Was there then no difference between St. Paul's point of view and St. James's? the

¹ "Analogy," part i. c. 5. ² 1 Thess. i. 3; Tit. iii. 9.

³ Rom. viii. 4.

answer seems to be that St. Paul writes rather as a theologian,¹ St. James as a religious moralist. It is true that a person is "justified," or restored to Divine favour, by faith including penitence, love, and good purpose, that is, by faith involving a full self-committal, before he has had time for a series of good "deeds"; but St. James, as a preacher, naturally regards the self-committal in the concrete.

We may perhaps be led to overlook another side of St. James's teaching. He is, no doubt, austere; but he can also be very tender. He says but little about doctrine as such, but he loves to dwell on the gracious side of the Gospel; he points to the "lights" which reveal their "Father, the Author of every good and perfect gift"; who is most compassionate and merciful, whose goodwill knows no change and passes under no shadow, who answers the prayer of faith, who gives grace to the humble, who promises a crown of life to those whose love for Him is true.

In our day, the notion of relying on orthodox belief is quite out of favour: in popular thought and speech, orthodoxy is almost a by-word. But the temptation to rest in a superficial pietism is all around us, and is perhaps more powerful than ever before. Religious emotion is studiously excited, and the danger of simply enjoying it, instead of using it as a stimulus for duty, is forgotten: men speak with fervour of the attractive and sympathetic aspect of Christi-

¹ See Dale, "The Atonement," p. 185.

anity, as if religion had nothing to do for man but to soothe and please him.¹ They forget that it has other and sterner functions ; they take no hint from our Lord's frequent repulse of a merely sentimental adhesion ; they need such a moral tonic as St. James's teaching would supply. If we have become infected by the relaxing influences of the time, if our Christianity has thus become limp and slack, if we have been hearers and not doers, if pious feeling has not with us been fixed into habit, we shall do well to consider seriously what is to be learned from the "righteous" kinsman,—in this respect, certainly, the accurate interpreter, of "Him that searcheth the reins and hearts." ²

¹ See Bishop Ellicott, "Comment. on Philippians," etc., p. 10.

² Dormer contends against the supposition that James's Christianity was Ebionitic. (Introd. to his "Person of Christ.") See also Gore, "Bamp. Lect." p. 254.

XXI

Prayer

Isaiah lxxv. 24: "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

WHEN the compilers of our first English Prayer-book took in hand the task of translating and adapting the collects of the old Latin services, they came upon one of which the first words, literally rendered, would run thus: "Almighty everlasting God, who in the abundance of Thy loving-kindness exceedest both the deserts and the desires of thy supplicants." This prayer they developed and enriched with a felicity which must, one would think, have been suggested by a recollection of the words—most truly "comfortable words"—with which, in the text, the prophet represents the Lord as crowning a series of truly "precious promises." And so it is that the collect in our English form contains the words that have doubtless helped so many to "draw near with confidence to the throne" of a Father; "Who art always more

ready to hear than we to pray." Many an Anglican worshipper must have been overwhelmed, whenever he gave himself time to think of it, by the astounding idea embodied in this clause. The Most High God—waiting, as it were, until man has leisure and inclination to approach Him; bending down as if in hope of catching the first sound of a human petition; assigning, as it seems, such disproportionate value to the prayer that is marred by such strangely unfilial slackness!

As an indication of Divine love, the saying thus condensed or summarized might almost constitute a trial of faith. Yet it does not really go beyond what is implied in the Psalmist's conception of a God "that heareth prayer"—of the soul's "access, everywhere and every moment, to infinite compassion . . . infinite all-sufficing goodness, to whom, as into the heart of the tenderest of friends, it could pour out its distresses, . . . before whom . . . it could lay down the burden of its care, and commit its way. . . . It is the idea of the unfailing tenderness of God, His understanding of every honest prayer."¹ These are words of one whose estimate of the Psalter may well be matched with Hooker's for beauty and insight, and sympathy with the devout minds of a far-back age. It is the pervading doctrine of the Old Testament, confirmed and amplified in the New, that prayer is a real act which has power with God, and prevails.

¹ Church, "Gifts of Civilization," etc., p. 425.

Difficulties, as we all know, have been raised as to its reality and efficacy. Those which arise out of such a conception of natural law as leaves no room for the sovereignty of God may be set aside by Christians when not professedly engaged in controversy with unbelief. The idea of a personal and living God, a Supreme Being with a moral character, and the idea of prayer to such a God, will be found to run together. No God, no prayer; but if God, then prayer. Those who believe in God may indeed be more or less embarrassed by intellectual puzzles as to the hearing or answering of prayer, considered as a part of the Divine administration; but they know well that questions may be raised as to the being of God Himself, to which they cannot give a complete answer. In a sense, He is "a God that hideth Himself," for we cannot "comprehend" His nature: our knowledge of Him is true as far as it goes, but it does not go anything like the whole way, though far enough for us to live by and worship by; it does not, for it cannot, penetrate beyond "economies" and illustrative terms, and representations adapted to our infirmity; it cannot take us behind the veil. We acquiesce in this condition; it does not "take away our God." And we take it as a matter of course that prayer is the act whereby we realize our hold on Him; we should all say confidently that a God to whom we durst not pray would not be really a God for us, but a mere idol of the mind,—in the famous words of

a great historian,¹ "a God of pantheists," of whom one could "make nothing" for practical purposes. As, then, these two ideas are not only akin, but inseparable, speculative difficulties about either may be similarly dealt with: the mystery of prayer, whatever it is, forms part of the mystery of God.

It may, however, be worth while to observe one or two objections to the Christian doctrine of prayer, which have been raised professedly by Theists, who consider themselves to have a "godly jealousy" for the dignity of the Infinite and Eternal, although in fact it is the same sort of jealousy which complains that the ideas of a special supernatural revelation, of a particular or discriminating providence, of an Incarnation of Deity in an individual human life, of atonement, of mediation, or the like, are in effect prejudicial to a worthy conception of Divine activity,—that they "limit" the God whom they attempt to bring so near.

One question, to be sure, is shallow enough. "Why tell the All-knowing One your own peculiar needs or wishes? Does He not know them already? Does He not understand our thoughts long before?" Of course He does, and our Lord reminds us of the fact: "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." Well, what is the inference? Is it, "Therefore you waste your time in laying before Him your requests"? No, it is, "Therefore do not pray as the heathen

¹ Niebuhr.

do, using vain repetitions," as if their gods were inattentive or ignorant; but "after this manner pray ye, Our Father, which art in heaven." Of course there have been notions and methods of prayer which were simply barbaric and irrational; men have imagined that by sheer importunity, by prolonged and vehement iteration, they could extort the desired benefit from powers with which no moral idea could be associated. When Christians address "their Father," they place themselves in a proper moral relation to One who knows all and can do all, who is Himself Love and Righteousness, and so qualify themselves, as far as is possible, for a profitable reception of what He may think fit to bestow.

But then, it is said, with somewhat more of plausibility,—“Supposing that you pray not merely by way of a pious exercise, in order to bring your mind into a proper condition of religious dutifulness,—which would be something like moralizing yourself by a sham,—but in the hope of producing an effect upon God’s will, is there not a real profaneness in the attempt to treat Him with whom is no variable-ness like a man who can be swayed this way or that by the urgency of this or that petitioner?” Again, the question involves a mistake. The prayer of a child of God is self-restricted within the lines of what he believes to be the will of his Father; and its action, thus defined, is supposed from the outset to be a means which that will has provided for in order to the

attainment of certain results. Let us see how this same objection is dealt with by the greatest theologian of the Middle Ages, who is never afraid of facing and analyzing the extremest forms of such unbelief as was more rife in the schools of that period than we are apt to imagine.¹ "It is thought that it is not fitting to pray; for by prayer the mind of the person prayed to is bent, so that he may do what is asked of him; but God's mind is inflexible and unchangeable." The answer begins by setting aside the opinion which denies providence, the opinion which would be called Necessarianism, and the opinion which treats providential arrangement as variable, and it goes on to represent prayer as an instrumentality to which Providence has assigned a certain effect; so that "our aim in praying is not that we may change God's arrangement, but that we may procure that which He has thus willed to bring to effect by means of prayer."² There is, therefore, in prayer, as made with "understanding," no offence against the principle of law as characterizing the whole range of the Divine government;³ rather do we expressly take our

¹ Cf. Rashdall, "Universities of Europe in Middle Ages," i. 355.

² S. Tho. Aquinas, Sum. 2a 2æ, q. 83, a. 2.

³ This principle is distinctly set forth in Newman's first University sermon, preached in 1826. He observes that "the inspired writers" exclude the notion of "arbitrary interference," and since they "imply that miracles are displayed not at random, but with a purpose, their declarations in this respect entirely agree with the deductions which

stand upon that principle, when we use prayer as a spiritual agency, which works not capriciously or irregularly, but according to the "order" of the spiritual world.

And if "law" rules both in the physical realm and in the moral, we shall see that it is unreasonable to resort to the distinction between prayer for spiritual objects and for temporal as if the former were right and the latter wrong *because* temporal things are governed by law. That implies that spiritual things are not so governed. If we may not pray for certain temporal objects, because it is like "asking a miracle," it would follow that we may not ask God to bring a sinner to repentance. For in either case we are asking Him to put forth His will: in neither case are we asking for the suppression of secondary causes, or the suspension of a law, unless "law" is supposed to imply that a "direct action of God's will" is impossible—which, for all true Theists, is an absurdity.¹ There is, indeed, one obvious limitation to be kept in mind when praying for temporal objects, which does not exist in regard to spiritual: we must pray with a distinct *salvo*—provided that

scientific observation has made concerning the general operation of established laws."

¹ See Jellett on the "Efficacy of Prayer," pp. 37-43, 54-57. No doubt the fourth petition in the Pater Noster may mean for A a prayer that the ordinary conditions of physical well-being may be preserved to him, and for B a prayer that they may be granted to him. But A, if he knows what he says, will be appealing not less than B to a living Will, that has all conditions at its continuous disposal.

they would promote our spiritual interest, which is immeasurably more important than temporal good of any kind. If they would not, then we say in effect, beforehand—

“Grant us not the ill
We blindly ask.”

No doubt we cannot, with our present faculties, understand how God, in answer to acceptable prayers poured forth from all parts of the world by all His worshippers in all their diversities of condition and circumstance, can so use the resources of His sovereignty as to provide for each according to what is best for each, and so prove Himself in each case to be the hearer and answerer of prayer. To us it may seem that so vast a multiplicity of “answers to prayer” would introduce confusion into the Divine “order.” But is not this just a form of the difficulty which we have in realizing the idea of a providence both particular and universal—of a God who grasps the whole of His creation, and yet, in Cardinal Newman’s expressive phrase, “confronts everything He has made, is present with His works, one by one,”¹ and makes each of his moral creatures

“as much His care as if beside
“Nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth.”

Our imagination simply breaks down before such

¹ Newman, “Lectures on University Education,” p. 92. In his “Sermons,” iii. 120, he shows how this “discriminative” action of God is illustrated in the Gospel history by our Lord’s treatment of individuals.

a thought ; yet if we exclude it from our belief, we are no longer at home in the first article of the creed. Our choice as Theists lies, in short, between such an idea of God and that of an original Creator who started the universe on its course, and now lets it go on like a machine—an idea which is surely dead and done with.¹ And we shall not be moved by the taunt, “Your God is a magnified man” ; we shall know that a Supreme Being who could not or would not “attend to particulars” would as such be imperfect, even as a Mind without will or moral purpose would, as such, be inferior to man himself—*unless* man himself be a machine.

It is a relief to turn from questions of this sort to the dignity of prayer as a religious act. An old monastic saying, “To labour is to pray,” has often of late years been very mischievously misused. It was intended for the comfort of monks when debarred from attending some of the daily offices by the obligation of manual labour or other work ; as if to say, “If you cannot be with Jesus in the choir, He will be with you in the field.” But it has been quoted by way of arguing that “honest work, however secular,” is really “as religious as formal worship.” The fallacy is obvious ; each duty has its own degree and its own sphere. But reverse the saying, and it is just as true that to pray is to work. An eminent Christian thinker, who had once undervalued prayer, came

¹ It is hardly too much to say with Carlyle, that out of such a deism “comes atheism.”—“Past and Present,” p. 127.

to see at the close of life that "the act of praying with the total concentration of the faculties was the very highest energy of which the human heart is capable."¹ It has been observed with equal point and truth, that prayer "has a certain astonishing power of setting every faculty of the soul at work, that it calls out the man ;" that it "is religion in action, and puts in motion the three forces of the understanding, the affections, and the will."² Or, in the words of a great and venerable Englishman, who throughout a long life of political interests has never ceased to witness for the sovereign claims of Christian faith, "the work of Divine worship is one of the most arduous which the human spirit can possibly set about ;" for its "first indispensable condition is" the knowledge of oneself ; the second, "a frame of the affections adjusted to this self-knowledge, and to the attributes and the more nearly felt presence of the Being before whom we stand ; and the third is the sustained mental effort necessary to complete the act, wherein every Christian is a priest."³

Such estimates of the greatness and the difficulty of this primary religious act may well shame us who have too often taken it too easily ; but it may also not improbably dispirit us. Many people, at least, will be apt to say, "If praying implies all this, I cannot attempt it ; I

¹ Coleridge, "Table Talk," p. 85.

² C. P. Eden, "Sermons at Oxford," p. 25 ; Liddon, "Some Elements of Religion," p. 169 ff.

³ Gladstone, "Gleanings," vi. 130.

can hardly find time for a few words of prayer before I begin my daily business, and at night I am often too tired even to go through the Lord's Prayer; and if ever I try to do more, my thoughts wander beyond recovery, as they do habitually when I go to church." You say this, Christian soul, but do you wish that you could say something more Christian-like? Think of God, think of Christ, think of sin, think of eternity; such thoughts will surely form in you that willing mind which God will accept and help forward. Try, at least, to say the prayer of all prayers with fixed mind and faithful intention. Forget for a moment that it is so familiar; get hold of the force and purport of each clause. Remember that to say prayers is not always to pray; that you are dealing with a personal, living God, who knows and regards you as a personal being capable of seeing and enjoying Him; that in praying you are training yourself for that high end, and that it is unspeakably worth while to take pains about it. Accustom yourself to offer up short prayers at some spare moments of a much occupied day: "O my God, I put myself into Thy hands;" "I give Thee myself, body and soul;" "keep me out of sin;" "give me grace to please Thee." Such a habit, when formed, will be no burden but a resource: it will help you to "walk with God"; it will tend to keep temptation at a distance; it will come in most helpfully when illness makes any mental effort impossible; you may find the benefit of it in

your last hour. And clasp to your breast the belief that God is watching over you and caring for you,—that you are worth much to Him, as redeemed by His Son's own blood,—that Jesus has promised in text after text that no prayer made in His name shall fail. And let us all be sure of this—that no one ever yet fell away from God and his own happiness until he had given up the habit of private prayer.¹

¹ Nothing has been said here of Intercessory Prayer, which is an eminent part of the exercise of the *sacerdotium laici*. Readers of St. Paul know what importance he attached to it. And see the lines beginning, "If thou shouldst never see my face again," in Tennyson's "Passing of Arthur."

XXII

The Ascension and the Principle of Mystery

Hebrews iv. 14 (R. V.): "Having then a great High Priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

"GIVEN the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, His Ascension follows." This has been said, and surely with truth: a risen Christ, if we think who and what Christ is, could not possibly continue an inmate of this lower world. He could not be as one of those whom, during His earthly ministry, He had bidden to "arise" from the sleep of death, to "come forth" alive out of the tomb. For what was their condition in that second span of life which an exercise of His sovereign power had granted to them? They were but replaced on the ground which they had formerly occupied, with its old familiar limitations, its liabilities to trouble, sickness, and sorrow, and its mortal destiny, all again to be met. The girl of twelve, the widow's son, and Lazarus, must all pass once more into the valley of the shadow, but not return once

more to the light of this life. The sentence was not cancelled; its execution was only postponed; the reprieve would hold good for so many years, not longer. But as we sing exultingly at Easter, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him:"¹ on the contrary, as Man, He was to be a life-giving spirit.² Therefore He could not tarry long, even under conditions so strangely unlike the former, in a sphere of existence which must needs obscure His glory. It was "expedient," He had said, "that He should go away to His Father;"³ and we may add that it was inevitable that He should resume that display of His Divine co-equality for which there was no room⁴ within the precinct of a life spent on earth in "the likeness of men." This will account for the comparative infrequency in St. Paul's epistles of an express mention of the Ascension, while his whole teaching centres in the affirmation that Christ had really risen, or been raised up, from the dead. No doubt he often alludes to the exaltation as following the Passion, as in the context just referred to, or as when he speaks of the Father as having "set Christ at His" own "right hand in the heavenly places;"⁵ and indeed the "Session" presupposes

¹ Rom. vi. 9.² 1 Cor. xv. 45.³ St. John xvi. 7.

⁴ Phil. ii. 6, 7. In so far as He "assumed the form of a servant," He did not insist on retaining τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, the "being in equal conditions of glory with God," or, in a "state" or in "circumstances" proper to such co-equality; cf. Gifford, "The Incarnation," pp. 48, 55, 71.

⁵ Eph. i. 20.

the "Ascension." Yet the Apostle does but seldom assert in so many words that Christ "ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things," or that He was received up in glory.¹ St. Peter says in one of his speeches, that heaven "must needs receive" Christ Jesus; and in his first epistle that Christ "went His way into heaven, and is at the right hand of God;"² and the Epistle to the Hebrews contains the words of our text, which really declare that our "great High Priest passed through the heavens." And why should apostles, or apostolic men, say more to Christian readers for whom the Resurrection was the veritable pivot of faith?

But from another point of view, we feel that the festival of the Ascension impresses upon us a peculiar sense of mystery, and raises questions which, at present, can receive no definite answer. What do we mean by saying, "He ascended into heaven"? Where is heaven? where is that right hand of God, whither, we are told, the Lord was removed on His departure from this world? Did He go beyond the solar system, or beyond the remotest of all known stars? And again, to quote from a great Ascension-day sermon, in which these questions are noticed,³ there is really "no difference between 'down' and 'up' as regards the sky;" and again, science will tell us that she has swept with her glasses, has scanned and mapped out, the whole ethereal

¹ Eph. iv. 10; 1 Tim. iii. 16.

² Acts iii. 21; 1 Peter iii. 22.

³ Newman, "Serm.," ii. 208.

region of which she has cognisance, and that it contains no place for the abode of a Christ in actual bodily exaltation. "Amid those 'spaces' whose very vastness seemed 'terrible' to Pascal in one of his sombre moods,¹ where will you seat your 'ascended Son of man'?" The presence of the difficulty has led others to give up, in regard to this article of belief, all notions of locality. They take refuge in vague terms, which translate "heaven" into a "condition of glory or blessedness"; but this is a method which might idealize the Incarnation itself into a symbol; and in regard to the point before us, it does not meet the fact that Christ's body, though spiritualized, is still really a body. Shall we not do better to avoid alike the extreme of an over-literal localization, and the extreme of a professed "spirituality" which, after all, is not of the Christian type? Let us say, as Bishop Butler would probably have taught us to say, that the what and the where of the "heaven" now in question is not within the reach of our present "faculties." Probably no words other than those of the sacred writers would bring us nearer to a clear view of what the "Ascension" actually implies. Here, as in some other cases, we must be content with what were once called "economies,"—adaptations of transcendent realities to our imperfect apprehension, "mirrors," as St. Paul puts it, through which we "see things as unexplained."² Christianity supposes all along the existence of a "supernatural"

¹ "Pensées," i, 41.

² Lit. "in enigma."

world, which cannot be explored by the researches, or gauged by the calculations, which belong to the world of sense; and if Christ were to enter that world in the truth of His human existence, He must needs find His "resting-place, His throne of sovereignty, the perfecting of His glory, in another sphere of being" than our own.¹

In a word, the Ascension represents to us the principle of mystery in its relation to Christian doctrine. What is a "mystery"? St. Paul mostly uses the word for what was once secret, but is "revealed";² yet knowledge in this sense is, in St. Paul's own phrase, "partial";³ and in our ordinary use of the word, a mystery is a truth partially known. We cannot look all round it: on this side is light, on that side shadow; we see a line here and a line there, but they do not meet; there are blank intervals which we know not how to fill up, and therefore "difficulties" which must wait long for their solution. Do we revolt against this limitation of capacity? Is it like a fretting "thorn" to our intellectual self-complacency? Then we are vainly quarrelling with the very conditions under which we live. Mystery is around us and within us; a very eminent scientist, who was always making war on Christian traditions,

¹ Cf. Dean Paget, "Studies in Christian Character," p. 248. The term "supernatural," though wanting in verbal accuracy, is intelligible as used for "supersensuous."

² *E. g.* 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 3; Col. i. 26, 27.

³ As opposed to "complete." 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

said twenty years ago, that "the mysteries of the Church were child's play compared with the mysteries of nature;"¹ if we look inward, the relation of soul to body seems inscrutable, while to say that we are mere material automata is to suppress a whole side of our consciousness; and what of that sense of free will which not all the experience of restraining influences can eradicate from the general human mind? Or what of the mystery of pain, of manifold mental suffering, of lives spoiled by circumstances from the outset, of unequal opportunities, not only of physical comfort but also of moral development, of bereavements which even religious men call "mysterious dispensations,"² and of all that pessimists have in mind when they talk of "the cruelty of nature," which St. Paul preferred to think of as the agony of the creation in its "travail"?³ Here are "dreadful faces looking in on us," problems which try many persons' faith in God's providential order. Yes, but then it is said, "Christianity ought to have relieved us from their weight; instead of that, it has added new difficulties of its own." Well, first, do you mean that a revelation, so called, is worthless unless it will answer all the questions you like to ask it? But a moral religion cannot promise to satisfy our curiosity, or exempt us from the

¹ Huxley, quoted by Gore, "Bamp. Lect.," p. 246.

² Does the phrase occur earlier than in "The Antiquary"? (vol. ii. c. 13).

³ See "Life and Letters of G. J. Romanes," p. 299.

exercise of trust or patience. And next, if reference is made to the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the Atonement, of mediatorial agency, of the working of grace, or of the eternal perdition of the obdurate, you must take care that you are looking at them as they really are, and not in some perverted form which does them injustice; viewed fairly, they might all be shown to be in close connexion with our root-ideas as to the character of God and the moral nature of man, and with these as enriched and filled out by coming into relation with the personality and the teaching of Christ. If we take Him for the central point, and try to see all things in Him, the wonders of nature or of grace will neither bewilder nor, so to say, irritate; they will overawe and subdue, but they will also tranquillize and sustain. We shall then see that while the Divine perfections must needs pass the understanding of creatures so feeble and faulty as we are, yet the greatness of a God who is at once all-powerful and all-righteous is in itself a resource, a support, a most "strong tower": our sense of dependence becomes confidence in Him on whom we depend,¹ and we "flee to" Him, as a Christian poet says, because we feel that we "cannot flee from Him anywhere."² So true is the momen-

¹ It is surely quite untrue that "pure and simple power," as such, "elicits love."—Mozley, "Essays," ii. 219. Only power united with goodness can do that. Irresistible strength, in separation from moral character, might simply "elicit" abhorrence, not less defiant because impotent.

² Trench's "Poems," i. 273.

tous dictum, that "the thought of God is the stay of the soul : " ¹ and if it was so to psalmists or prophets, to all the righteous men of the old covenant, how much more so to those who are "illuminated with the knowledge of His glory as reflected in the face of Jesus Christ ! " ²

Thus the mysterious element in Christianity, being inseparably linked to its moral and spiritual elements, makes it all the more congruous to human nature, and all the fitter to represent the mind and the action of Him who is at once the Eternal and the Most High. It is thus invested with somewhat of His infinity ; it transcends the formulas which indicate its aspects, but cannot exhaust their meaning ; and so we instinctively feel that, as a religion, it is above us, and in its presence our shallowness and irreverence stand reproved. It has to be taken seriously, studied with sympathetic attention, allowed to impress us by degrees ; and it will approve itself all the more completely, as we learn to think more worthily of God, and of His Son, the holder of "all authority," as His "interpreter." ³ Loyalty to Christ the God-Man, an effective belief in His actual and permanent Incarnation, will shed over any "difficulties" that adhere to Christian teaching some radiance from the excellent glory, which may hearten us up to trust God and bide His time. And here the Ascension comes in to

¹ Newman, "Serm.," v. 313 ff.

² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

³ St. Matt. xxviii. 18 ; St. John i. 18.

help us, reminding us that Christ, who for us went through the profoundest self-humiliation, is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; ¹ that He lives on and reigns on through the ages; and that, as we believe Him to have "ascended up where He was before," we have yet stronger reason than Apostles had at Capernaum to be sure that He "has the words of eternal life." ² In the power of that assurance,—which, we may well say, is made doubly sure by the gracious mystery of His Sacramental Presence,—let us resolve to "hold our confession" faster than ever, by deriving from it the impulse that can lift our lives right upwards, in ever-increasing moral conformity to the mind and will of that glorified Redeemer, whom we have as a High Priest all the more "prevalent," ³ because He is withdrawn behind the veil. For what is He doing there for us? Is He simply "praying"? No; "His glorified presence is" a perpetual "presentation" of Himself, as One who was dead and is living; "He pleads by what He is." ⁴ And it is pre-eminently in the Eucharistic "counterpart" of this His heavenly ministration that things below are lifted up into things above. ⁵

¹ Acts v. 31.

² St. John vi. 62, 68.

³ Pearson "On the Creed," i. 173.

⁴ Moberly, "Ministerial Priesthood," p. 246 ff.

⁵ This is the idea of the "Supplices te" in the Roman liturgy, which corresponds to the Eastern "Invocation."

XXIII

The Spirit of Power

Acts i. 8 (R. V.): "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

WE do not appreciate the significance of this saying of our Divine Lord, unless we remember that it is part of an answer to a question which ought not to have been put. That it is here recorded as having been put, is among the lesser illustrations of the authenticity of St. Luke's second treatise. An inventor would not have represented the Apostles, in these last moments of their Master's stay on earth, as still possessed by an unspiritual curiosity, still harping on the idea of a temporal kingdom of Israel as the natural consummation of His Messiahship. We have waited long for it, they seem to say; now that He has triumphed so gloriously over death, the hour must surely have come. No, He answers, "times and seasons" are "under the Father's own authority"; and without reaffirming the spiritual character of His Kingdom, He implies that the information which they wish for would do them no good, and that,

in a word, it will not be given. But the refusal of what is profitless is compensated by the promise of a gift of infinite value. "This, which you blindly desire,—even after I have been so long time with you,—after all that followed on the brief triumph of the day of Hosannas,—you shall not have: something else, which you would have done better to ask for, you shall receive when I send upon you the promised Spirit from the Father."

And as we all have our portion in the presence of that "other Paraclete," so we all have an interest in the "power" which He was to bring. Not, indeed, in every form of it; as there are diversities of gifts, so the "Spirit of power" and "not of fearfulness," which St. Paul speaks of as bestowed on himself and Timothy,¹ was a ministerial endowment, designed for the equipment of teachers who, as such, would have peculiar trials of courage as a momentous element of faithfulness in ministry. And the primary import of our Lord's words in the text relates evidently to "power" in this sense: yet in so far as all members of the Church of Christ are temples of the Spirit and spheres of His activity, the promise, "Ye shall receive power," may be to clergy and laity alike at once an inspiration and a ground of responsibility. The interior strength that makes and sustains character,—the moral manhood which alone can save a life from waste and collapse,—the "power" which can win "victory" over "the

¹ 2 Tim. i. 7.

devil, the world, and the flesh,"—this is what all Christians may have for the asking. Do we care about obtaining it? Do our hearts respond to the gracious announcement? Do our consciences tell us, This is what you need?

In the eighteenth century, and somewhat later, Christianity was charged by unbelievers with exaggerating the moral infirmities of human nature, in order to keep it under pupilage. Men said in effect, "You clergy would fain persuade us that we cannot walk along the path of virtue without artificial supports which you alone can supply. We see your motive: you would fain 'put out the eyes of' those whom you can frighten into submissiveness. If they did but know it, they can become what men ought to be by simple self-respect and purpose." In 1812 an English poet, remarkable for keen and ruthless insight, described a vehement enemy of priests as confident in the moral sufficiency of his "reason and feelings":

"Tempted by sins, let me their strength defy,
But have no second in a surplice by:"

and sketched the programme of a clever youth enthusiastic for virtue, who

"To all good would soar, would fly all sin,
By the pure prompting of the will within:"

but who lived to learn by experience—

"How feebly honour guards the heart from crime." ¹

¹ Crabbe, "Tales," iii. and xi. On the Rousseauist hypothesis of the goodness of man's original tendencies, cf. Mozley, "Essays," ii. 238; Mallet, "French Revol.," p. 37.

It may be that a self-reliance of this sort has been suggested to many in our day by the undoubted moral seriousness of men who have disowned the sanctions of religion. Yet while their rectitude too often puts to shame the pitiful slackness and inconsistency of believers, it cannot be taken as proving that the average man, with the ordinary temptations which are often but little known to intellectualists, can "keep straight" by the sheer force of unassisted "good resolutions." And so a class of "worldly philosophers and poets" has gone even beyond St. Paul in emphasizing the radical corruption of human nature;¹ and Naturalism has minimized the moral capacity of a race that supernatural religion would first "convict of sin" and then make capable of sanctity.

~~For~~ Scripture is true to both sides of the case. 7 It does not encourage man to think that he can lift himself up "out of the horrible pit and the miry clay;" but it tells him of a Power that can "set his feet upon the rock, and establish his goings" for the future. It sobers him, yet cheers him; it refutes an ignorant self-confidence, but it banishes a faithless despair. It can afford to take full account of facts which sadden, because it throws such light on facts which comfort. It shows how the "infinite pathos" of our destiny is met, as it only can be met, by the "infinite pity" of Him who revealed Himself as fatherlike, or even as motherlike,² ages before He sent His Son to lay bare our

¹ Mozley, "Lectures," p. 152 ff. ² Isa. xlix. 15.

moral wounds and to bind them up. It is eminently characteristic of St. Paul, as a true interpreter of the mind of that gracious Healer, that the context in which he speaks of creation as "subject to vanity" should brighten with the prospect of coming deliverance, and close, as in a strain of triumphant music, with the "persuasion" that nothing external to their own wills should be "able to separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" those who perseveringly desire to dwell in it and to have it for their own.

The children of faith under the Old Covenant, who were "not to be made perfect without us," did yet go through an experience of being "made strong out of weakness," which was a prelude to the promise made on Olivet, "Ye shall receive power." Chosen leaders of Israel, men greatly beloved of God, were commanded to "be strong and of good courage"; the great all-sufficing assurance, "I am thy God," runs on into "I will strengthen thee";¹ power to do right, to become good, is to be had on the condition of heart-loyalty; given this, "the weak 'shall' say, I am strong," "the lame shall take the prey," more and more strength shall be his "who hath no might," until he can "mount up with eagle-wings, and run and not be weary."² And Christ, by His own mouth, or by those who were filled with His Spirit, reaffirms, illuminates, completes all that on this

¹ Isa. xli. 10.

² Joel iii. 10; Isa. xxxiii. 23; xl. 29, 31.

enkindling theme had been spoken before by the prophets. He says more than they had said about the sickness of humanity, but much more than they could say about its cure. The Gospel points back to a mysterious Fall as accounting for the dreadful phenomenon of sin as pervading the race; but it reveals another fact which, as it has been most truly said,¹ is "as little congenial to a superficial view of life as is the doctrine of the Fall," the fact of grace as a power of recovery—of grace as originating good by stimulating and reinforcing the will, and as following up its primal activities by "working with" the will when responsive, and carrying it on into fuller union with the perfect will of God. If we think steadily of this, we begin to understand what may have seemed the paradox of St. Augustine's prayer, "Give me the power to do what Thou commandest, and then command whatsoever Thou wilt."² Let us hear the Apostle who knew so intimately what man was when left to himself, and what he could become when "the pressure of Christ's hand"³ was laid on him with power; he speaks of that power as "made perfect in his own weakness," of himself as "strong" when most conscious of being "weak," and of the Spirit as pouring strength "into the inner man"; and if we want to know what makes him dwell so thankfully on this gift, let us read what he says

¹ Dean Paget, "Faculties and Difficulties," etc., p. 191.

² "Confess." x. 40.

³ "John Inglesant," p. 337.

in the seventh chapter to the Romans, as to his own experience of a sharp intense conflict between "the law of the mind" and "the law of sin in the flesh." Natural weakness is so great, and the remedy provided is so effective; this thought is with him always; why is it so seldom with us?

We have been "confirmed"; over us that venerable prayer has been uttered—"Strengthen them, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter"; and among the seven gifts then asked for, not one is more germane to the occasion than that of might or ghostly strength. But Confirmation, as it did not inaugurate in us the indwelling presence of the Spirit, so it is far from exhausting His bounties. In Keble's poem on Confirmation, the "Spirit of might and sweetness too" is invoked as a lifelong Helper in age as well as in youth, "and oft as sin and sorrow tire." The words, "Ye shall receive power," hold good whenever we ask for it. Yes, but some one will say, "I have asked for it again and again, have seemed to receive it, have repeatedly lost it. My religion is still a thing of moods; I make resolutions on Sunday morning, and what has become of them, say by Tuesday night? It is like irony to talk to *me* of becoming strong against temptation, when I am habitually unstable as water." O Christian soul, have you not at least a wish to be made strong? That is something to start with—it proves that you have in you the potency of true moral and spiritual invigoration. Only pray

that the smoking flax of good desire may be fanned by the Spirit's breath, that the feeble glow may brighten into a flame. And then turn at once to some duty, the duty nearest at hand, and try to do it as well as you can for the Lord's sake. And never give in or give up, whatever befalls you; let no experience of the force of temptation make you doubt the power and will of Christ to carry you through, if you cling to Him perseveringly.

The reason of despondency as to improvement will be found to consist largely in our very imperfect sense of what, if the phrase were permissible, one might call the interest which God takes in our highest well-being. If we could realize *this*, the conviction would inspire us with the hopes that are born of trust.

The week before Pentecost was of old called a week of "expectation"; let us remember what strength was given to those who were waiting in Jerusalem for the descent of the Holy Spirit. Let us believe that the Gospel is still what it was, "the power of God unto salvation"; and let us specially beg of Him, first, a truer sense of our intrinsic weakness, and next, a fresh infusion of that Divine force which is the characteristic blessing of Whitsuntide.

XXIV

True and False Spirituality

Rom. viii. 6 : "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

WE are sometimes inclined to think that the chief festivals might be trusted to preach their own sermons ; or that, at any rate, but very few words can be necessary by way of comment on the teaching which their services would convey, even although the preacher's voice were silent. The services of Christmas and Easter have indeed "a voice for those who understand"; but the significance of Ascension Day is, even now, less fully appreciated by Church-goers than befits their belief in a great article of the Creed ; and although the "White Sunday" is recognized as a great festival, it is apt to pass over without leaving behind it any very distinct impression. The presence and working of the Holy Spirit as sent by Christ to abide in His Church—this is acknowledged to be its theme ; and yet there are those who feel that the very vastness of the subject is, in a sense, bewildering : they want points to fix upon, landmarks

emerging from the midst of a golden haze. Let them, then, take a single word, most intimately associated with the season—a word with a great scope, and which, rightly apprehended—for much lies in that—will suggest considerations that were never more opportune than now.

That word is the adjective “spiritual.” Think first of the immense difference which it makes to our whole view of life, and therein to our estimate of its possibilities and its duties, whether our standpoint is that of those who deny, or of those who affirm, that there is a spiritual world which is superior to the material; that man is fundamentally a spiritual being, with spiritual needs and spiritual faculties; that he has to do with spiritual facts, and is dependent in all sense on a Supreme Spirit, with whom he can hold spiritual communion. Are these things so, or are they not? Some thirty years ago, observant Christian minds in England were painfully conscious of the general predominance of a mechanical view of life.¹ A way of thinking which ignored spiritual realities had in the earlier part of the century received a check, but had “regained the ascendant” through a combination of forces, one of which was that rapid advance of physical science which might seem to disprove God while it was simply “omitting”² Him. But a very

¹ J. C. Shairp, “Studies in Poetry and Philosophy,” pp. xvii, 106, 236.

² H. S. Holland, “Pleas and Claims for Christ,” p. 24.

acute thinker ¹ foretold in 1867 that "the next generation would see a reaction towards spiritual belief;" and now men take heart to affirm on the Christian side that "there are facts of the soul and spirit" which are "as certain and urgent as those of the body, and that any attempt to explain humanity which ignores or denies the former facts dooms itself to failure" ² as leaving out the chief elements of its case. And if so, then that which lies at the very root of Whitsuntide thought has again made good its claim to shape our practical convictions, and thereby to govern and to characterize our life.

But next, let us take our stand among those to whom this principle is not only an admitted truth, but something too clear to need discussion. "Of course," persons say, "the soul is more than the body, and spiritual interests outweigh material; of course religion, and morality too, for that matter, stand or fall with this supremacy of the spiritual: to keep them spiritual is *the* thing to aim at." But then here comes in the necessity of distinguishing between one kind of spirituality and another. There is a morbid, unhealthy, unchristian counterfeit of that true spirituality which has the blood of New Testament religion in its veins. It has been thought "spiritual" to refine away the Gospel facts into beautiful ideas, of which it has been well said that "they exert no con-

¹ Dean Mansel.

² E. F. Sampson, "Christ Church Sermons," p. xxxix.

straining power upon us";¹ or to protest against compromising the "essential spirit" of the teaching of Jesus by binding it up with a "legendary supernaturalism"; or to treat the doctrine of His corporeal resurrection as "carnal"; or to interpret the liberty wherewith He made us free as setting the enlightened soul not only above "ordinances," but above moral law in itself. This is enough to show that very strange things have been said and done in the name of spirituality; but without going so far outside the lines of ordinary Christian opinion, we may easily see that within those lines a grave misuse of the name is not only possible but frequent.

English people are often simply dominated by the pre-assumption that that which is "external" can have no function in the affairs of the soul,—and this although they are singularly unapt to walk by faith, and to treat the unseen world as a reality. They have often been accustomed to look at religion wholly, or all but wholly, from the individualist point of view. The notion of dependence on ordinances or institutions is uncongenial to them: they say that they can allow nothing to "come between God and their own souls"; it does not occur to them to ask whether God Himself may not have ordained some such intermediate agency.² It seems as if—although they could not con-

¹ Trench, "Huls. Lect.," p. 172.

² See W. Law, "Letters to Bishop Hoadly," ed. Nash and Gore, p. 90 ff., and, more especially, p. 116.

sciously put their feeling into such a form—they instinctively shrink from what would make their religion too manifold, majestic, and, so to speak, over-arching, instead of being just such as they can personally keep in hand and manage. Form and spirit, for them, are ideas not only antithetical, but antagonistic; and although they believe that Christ has ordained, for instance, the Sacrament of Communion, and look for some real benefit from its devout reception, they somehow isolate it, in thought, from His work and from His person; they do not look through it to Himself, as if He were personally employing it as His organ. And so, for want of this simple clue, which serves alike in regard to all the “means of grace,” they take it as a first principle that to attach any primary religious importance to Church or Sacraments or Ministry is to strangle the “spirit,” and to put forms in the place of the Lord.

The answer to those who thus object to the combination of the outward with the inward goes back to the fountain-head of religion. We believe in God, a God who is living and “personal,” and of whom the fourth Gospel affirms that He “is Spirit.” But, being Spirit, He is at once Creator and Sustainer of the whole physical universe; essentially distinct from it, yet continuously present throughout it; in technical phrase, at once “transcendent” and “immanent.” His “adorable never-ceasing energy”¹ mixes itself up with all the history

¹ Cf. Newman on “University Education,” pp. 59, 93.

of the creation," of human society, of each individual human life, so that "atoms and their properties," and all forces at work in the whole range of evolutionary process, all movements of nature, all developments of thought, the fortunes of all nations, the infinite complex varieties of character, all are in His hand, who is sovereign over matter as over spirit, and, being Master in His own house,—for

"A God not free,
No God is he,"—

can dispose of it, and of all agencies within it, as may best serve those moral ends which are supreme in the order of His providential administration.

Again, from the idea of such a God we pass readily to the idea of a "revelation";¹ and we Christians believe such a revelation to have been given through the Word who became flesh. Yet there have been those who avowedly rejected the idea of an Incarnation as degrading to the Divine Infinity. For misbelief, in one form or another, has often claimed a monopoly of reverence; it has had its own "will-worship"; it has solemnly condemned the "sensuousness" of the Church's idea of devotion, has been supercilious over the "anthropomorphism" involved in her method of approach to God, as exhibited not through a physical but through a human medium, which was

¹ Compare Newman, "University Sermons," p. 239, with G. J. Romanes, "Thoughts on Religion," p. 165.

“substantiated in the Incarnation”;¹ its instinct has been to drive back the Divine idea into a vague immensity, or to reduce it to an abstraction which “could not save.” But for those who accept the New Testament, it should be enough that the Gospel which repeatedly enforces the necessity of “spirit and truth” in worship is the very Gospel to which we turn for fullest presentation of the Incarnation in both its aspects—of Christ as perfect God and perfect man.

And then, having got thus far, a believing Christian should be prepared to recognize a real affinity between that unique combination of Godhead and Manhood with the relation between outward sign and inward grace in the Sacraments. Let us not say that those who reject the sacramental principle should in consistency reject the Incarnation, but rather hope that their belief in the latter may lead them on to a worthier estimate of the former. And we may say that a Gospel Christianity which was *not* sacramental would resemble a pathway broken off short. We are conscious of a league of outward with inward in our own constitution; and we find it again exhibited in the God-Man who came to redeem our whole nature, and who during His ministry significantly illustrated His miracles of healing by some outward gesture or symbolical act:² and we might well think it strange if this principle

¹ Cf. Mozley, “Essays,” ii. 112-118.

² Dean Paget, in “Lux Mundi,” p. 414 ff.

were absent from the system which He constituted for the due "supply" and development of His body mystical¹ through union with His life-giving manhood. As it is, we can see why these ordinances have been said to "extend" the beneficial effects of the Incarnation:² they make it a living fact for us; they bring the Incarnate Saviour into our midst; they are "calculated to be the most permanent witnesses of the true doctrine of spiritual grace"³ as stored up in Him; so that our conceptions of His power and His love are defined and focussed, are kept fresh and ready for service, by the faithful and devout use of an instrumentality which secures to Him the glory of the sole effectual Agent. Most especially is this realized in that highest Sacrament which has been called the "recapitulation" of the Christian religion, in which we attain the point of closest contact with Christ as "a quickening spirit" for soul and body.

It will be said, "This is well enough in theory, but practically Sacramentalism 'spells' formalism." Sacramentalism, so to call it, can doubtless be misapprehended and misused, with the worst results. But it need not be so, and it is men's own fault when it is so. In a world where "noblest things find vilest using," the doctrines of grace and of faith, the reading

¹ See p. 169.

² This, of course, is the meaning of the lax phrase of Jeremy Taylor, "an extension of the Incarnation."

³ Gladstone, "Church Principles," etc., p. 181.

of the Bible or of devout books, theological study, attendance on preaching, ministerial functions, religious and philanthropic activities—all can be perverted from their due effect, can be turned into occasions of falling. It is a proverb that the corruption of a very good thing is a very bad thing. Let us by all means be on our guard against an insidious evil which may act on belief and worship and “churchliness” as a leaven of mischief, tainting, disordering, de-spiritualizing. It is possible to mistake the mere admiration of grandeur in an ecclesiastical system, of solemnity or pathos in a religious ceremonial, for effective belief in the kingdom of God, and for the devotion which He looks for and will approve. A sense of beauty is not, of itself, true love for the place where God’s honour dwelleth: a taste for the details of ritual may degenerate into a pedantic technicalism, which involves narrowness and promotes self-deceit. Zeal in the Church’s cause may for want of humility be hardened into partisanship, with its accompaniments of unscrupulousness as to means, and unfairness to opponents. How then shall we keep formalism at a distance? First, by increasing our sense of proportion among the various elements of religious life, in which nothing will so help us as the study of St. Paul. Next, by remembering that Christianity is essentially a moral religion, and avoiding whatever could diminish our perception of the evil of sin. Thirdly, by endeavouring to do all things in Christ, and to

keep our daily conduct in relation to our use of His ordinances. And lastly, by making it our aim to "walk by the Spirit," as those should who believe that His coming and presence have made life quite other than it had been without them, that eyes and ears have been spiritually opened, and hearts enlarged, and wills set right.

To sum up all in a few words: let Whitsuntide stimulate us to cultivate true Christian spirituality, and then it will draw us nearer to Him who could send down the Holy Spirit because He Himself was glorified and enthroned.¹

¹ It has been objected that "even if the principle of sacramental grace can be reconciled with spirituality,—even if the due reception of grace through sacramental *media* can spiritualize our ordinary life, it can only do so at certain intervals, whereas what we want is a continuous spiritual influence." This objection would tell equally against all recurring times of worship, all specific opportunities of access to God. It is our fault if we insulate them, instead of using them as focuses and centres. In regard to the attempt to construct an "idealistic Christianity," see an article in the "Contemporary Review" for December 1892. It is "a backsliding into the errors that underlay certain phases of Gnosticism. It looks very superfine, but it is very unreal," etc. See also Holland, "On Behalf of Belief," p. 41 ff.

XXV

The Transfiguration

2 Peter i. 17, 18 (R. V.): "For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

WHENEVER the 6th of August comes round, one is apt to wonder why the Reformers in the reign of Edward the Sixth suppressed the festival of the Transfiguration. It was not, indeed, a festival of great antiquity, but for centuries it had been observed in England, according to the most widely extended of English ritual "Uses," by way of express and solemn homage to the Divine majesty of our Lord, as manifested in a Biblical event. Perhaps it may have been thought that, as that event was not associated with any particular gift or blessing, the memorial of it might be dropped without loss. If so, we may well think that the view was superficial, and that the withdrawal of the day from the list of English Church holydays has thus far impoverished the Prayer-book. The

American Church has recently restored the festival, and provided it with a newly-composed Collect, an Epistle containing our text, and a Gospel from St. Luke's account of the wonderful scene on the mountain height, which has been popularly but incorrectly identified with Tabor.

And surely the first three Evangelists intend their readers to regard that scene as a prominent landmark in the last year of our Lord's ministry. They all prefix to it the first of three emphatic warnings as to the approaching Passion and the obligation of "cross-bearing" which it would lay upon His servants: warnings followed by a prediction of the Second Coming in glory,—a glory which, St. Luke takes care to indicate, will be Christ's own as well as the Father's. Each of the three writers contributes some detail to the combined picture: the place, say Matthew and Mark, is "far apart," out of reach of common observation; the Lord's immediate purpose in this act of retirement is declared by Luke to be "prayer." Matthew and Mark say that He was "transformed," the word being rendered, somewhat laxly, "transfigured," but the sense being given by Luke, "the appearance of His countenance became different." Matthew, anticipating a phrase used in regard to the first vision in Patmos, tells us that "His face did shine as the sun," and adds that "His garments were white as the light," that is, as Mark and Luke say, "glistening," or "dazzling"; and Mark adds, "so as no fuller on earth could whiten them." The converse of Moses and

Elijah with the Lord turned, as Luke tells us, on "His decease,"—His "going forth" from the world of mortal life, "which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Mark and Luke explain, in some sort, the proposal made by Peter to construct three tents, in order to detain the entrancing vision : "he did not know what he said," or "he knew not what to say," or, "to answer, for they were," or "they became, sore afraid : " it was, indeed, "a glorious¹ thing to be there," but still the sight was awful with the awfulness which on similar occasions had made Isaiah cry, "Woe is me," and had bowed down Ezekiel to the earth. But it is Luke who significantly guarantees the reality of the three Apostles' experience, by affirming that they were fully awake when they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him, whose subsequent departure under the "overshadowing cloud" renewed their sense of awe, which was heightened by the "voice from the majestic glory, This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him"; after which, as Matthew tells us, Jesus dispelled their fear by His touch and His gracious words.

This is the story : it will be observed that St. John's silence about it is parallel to his silence as to the institution of the Sacraments. In the latter case, he gives us, as it were, the interpretation of his predecessors' account ; and so here it is to his Gospel that we look for the idea underlying the fact of the Trans-

¹ Καλόν.

figuration,—he supplies us with what they do not give, with a full answer to the question what the event which they record had to teach, and why they have laid such stress upon it ; and withal he thus enables us to set aside those separationist theories which maintain that the first three Gospels give us on the whole the Jesus of history,—abating, that is to say, some legendary accretions,—and that the fourth gives us only the Jesus of spiritual imagination. For here the first three—commonly called the Synoptists—leave us asking for a comment on their text ; we turn to the fourth Gospel, and the comment stands out luminous as the sacred face in the transfiguration-splendour.

For, first, the import of the scene was certainly doctrinal, or, as it has been expressed, “theological.”¹ The Word, says St. John, was with God and was God, “yet that same Word, Himself the true light which lighteneth every man, became flesh, and had His tabernacle among us, and we beheld His glory, a glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father.” The phrase is large enough to include such a visible manifestation as St. John had seen on the holy mount, but its significance certainly does not stop there. When the Son of God stooped to become incarnate, He submitted Himself, as man, to the limitations inseparable from humanity—limitations affecting both its mental and spiritual elements. He

¹ Bishop Ellicott, “Huls. Lect. on Life of Our Lord,” p. 227. Cp. Newman’s “Sermons,” iii. 265.

“disparaged” Himself¹ by thus becoming, as man, inferior to the Father, while as God He continued to be co-equal with the Father; in the new or human sphere of His existence, which He really occupied without abandoning the Divine, He leaned in prayer on His Father’s support, He referred Himself in all things to His Father’s will, He “learned obedience by the things which He suffered,” and through which He was “made perfect.” It was incompatible with the conditions of His truly human life that He should continuously, *in* that life, exhibit His Divine majesty; as a rule, He refrained from exhibiting it, and did but very gradually, and with a tender consideration for the weakness of spiritual perception even among His most trusted disciples, lift up the veil and show what His unique Sonship meant.

Now and again, sometimes by hints, sometimes by more distinct intimations, He trained them carefully, and with a wonderful and august

¹ Ἐκένωσεν, in Phil. ii. 7, may have this sense, which is equivalent to the A. V. rendering, as if to say, Instead of insisting on an unqualified possession of His co-equality, He willed to descend to a position of “inferiority to God” in so far, and only in so far, as His human life was concerned. The sense of the verb as here used will be further considered below: but that *ὑπάρχων* may indicate a condition at once pre-existent and *persistent* appears from Rom. iv. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 7, xii. 22; 2 Cor. viii. 17, xii. 16; Gal. i. 14, ii. 14. And the context, Phil. ii. 3, 4, shows that no actual surrender of powers or attributes on the part of Christ is in the mind of the Apostle: an unselfish person does not surrender “what is his own” when he gives attention “also to what belongs to others.”

patience, for that full apprehension and recognition of His true relation to the Father which could not be attained by unassisted "flesh and blood," and which, indeed, did not take final expression until he who had once doubted that Jesus was risen exclaimed that Jesus was his Lord and his God. And in the Transfiguration He was vouchsafing to the chosen three such a visible manifestation as might help them to appreciate and piece together revelations internal and spiritual.

But then, again, this partial unfolding of His "glory" had a prophetic, a predictive force. Coming as it did so soon after He had inflicted upon them the inevitable shock of learning that He was "to suffer many things and be slain,"—a shock which had made even Peter slip back from the ground which he had reached in his confession at Cæsarea Philippi,—the Transfiguration was meant to sustain their faith and hope under the tremendous trial which was "to sift them as wheat," and under which they might conceivably deny Him by despair. It did not, as we know, prove successful with two of them: that strange unretentiveness which made the Apostles in general forget that He was not only to die, but also to be raised again on the third day, prevented Peter and James from looking back in that hour of need to a scene which might have been a treasure of strong assurance. But may we not believe that it was present to the mind of the beloved disciple when he went with Jesus into the high priest's

courtyard, and when he stood with Mary beside the Cross? And in the text we see Peter, at the close of his apostolic career, referring to what he had seen and heard on the holy mount, as one of the proofs that in proclaiming Jesus as the Christ he had not been following cunningly devised fables. As one of the three could appeal to what he had seen with his eyes in regard to the Word of Life, so another could say that he had been made an eye-witness of his Lord's majesty ; nor can we doubt that he clung to that recollection as to a foretaste of that intercourse with the glorified Redeemer which Christians might hope to share with prophets of the older covenant amid a glory that was never to pass away.

Once more,—as all facts pertaining to the person and work of Christ are meant to do us good morally, so it is in a high degree with the Transfiguration. For sometimes we too have moments of clearer vision—sudden strong quickenings of the faculty of faith, so that we realize vividly what at other times we simply accept as true. It is part of our belief, we utter it in creeds, we do not question it ; only somehow we do not get into vital contact with it—but sometimes we do. We seem then “to catch a glimpse of a Form which we shall hereafter see face to face.”¹ Especially is this the case—not always, by any means, but sometimes—at or after a good Communion. The soul says, “It is the Lord”; the Eucharist brings

¹ See the wonderful passage in Newman's “Sermons,” v. 10.

home the Incarnation as a living reality ; we breathe an atmosphere vital with Christ's presence ; a door opens, and the invisible world flows in. We say, with St. Peter, "It is good for us to be here." Yes, but, as he found in his own case, we are not meant to stay on the mountain ; the exceptional radiance must fade into the light of common day. And here come in two lessons—one special, the other more general. When our Lord, with His face and garments in their everyday appearance, and His three Apostles still astounded and awestruck, descended into the plain, what did they find there? A case of misery to be alleviated, a poor father who had found the other disciples unable to heal his suffering child, and who cried, as one hoping against hope, "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us,"—the most pathetic sentence, perhaps, in St. Mark's gospel. And is not this most practically suggestive? If the Lord begins to enrich our souls with some peculiarly vivid conviction of His nearness, His power to save to the uttermost, His supernatural energetic love, a love as of the Only-begotten, do not let us dissipate the force of such a visitation by talking about it, but rather remember how He bade the eye-witnesses to keep close what they had seen and heard. To indulge religious emotion for its own sake is always perilous : "the impression grows weaker" the more we dwell upon it without using it as a "motive" for action. And action is possible wherever there is a brother in need of help.

If a Christian has in some special way realized the character of God, and thereby in effect seen the Divine glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ, can he make a better use of the privilege than by trying to do some kindness, to render some opportune help, for Christ's sake, to one of the vast multitude of sufferers for whom, as for himself, Christ died? Their condition is often very adverse to faith. Pain may intensify selfishness, poverty may stifle all thought of another world, bereavement may embitter a soul into revolt, evil influences potent from very childhood may deaden the conscience and pervert the will; but if love draws near, not in word only, but in action, and with power fresh from the presence of Christ, it may bring Him with it as the Healer.

And in general, let us remember how St. Paul uses the very word which in the first two Gospels we render "transfigured." He is full of the idea of "glory"; if the old dispensation had for its time a glory, how much more the new? "We all, with unveiled face" (that is, without hindrance to vision), "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image" that He wears "from" one degree of "glory to" another,¹ by a continual process of increasing conformity to His mind and heart and will. Such a gazing on Christ by the spiritual eyesight of faith is not, and cannot be, "unfruitful."² Even in merely human relations, to live with a person revered

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18. ² "Christian Year," Ascension Day.

and loved is in some sort to assimilate his characteristics ; and what has been said by a great writer as an explanation of primitive Christian goodness, that Christ had "imprinted the image or idea of Himself on the minds of His subjects individually,"¹ may in a measure become true even of us, if we frankly yield ourselves to His Spirit, and beg that by "learning" Him in good earnest, we may put on that new man² which has Him for its archetype and its author.³

¹ Newman, "Grammar of Assent," p. 458.

² Eph. iv. 20 ff.

³ The American collect for the Transfiguration is as follows : "O God, who on the mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses Thine only begotten Son wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening ; Mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in His beauty, who with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth one God, world without end." The observance of the festival on the day after the "nones" of August, that is, on the 6th of August, is traceable in England to A.D. 805 : see a charter of Cuthred, king of Kent, in Kemble's "Codex Diplom." i. 233. Bede does not mention it in his list of holydays.

XXVI

Strength through Obedience

Ps. ciii. 20: "Bless the Lord, ye His angels,
that excel in strength, that do His commandments,
hearkening unto the voice of His word."

THIS verse comes naturally into our thoughts on the festival of St. Michael and all Angels—a festival which in this year¹ overshadows, for ritual purposes, the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, which concurs with it. Yet in the Epistle for that Sunday there is a passage which harmonizes remarkably with the Psalmist's noble conception of the nature and character of the angels of God. St. Paul appears as interceding with God on behalf of those who were to read his Epistle;² and what is the first gift that he asks for them? That they may be "strengthened with power through the Spirit, in the inner man;" the words implying that this power is to flow "into" their inmost being. Further on he exhorts them to "be strong," literally, to "be made powerful, in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."

¹ 1895.

² Eph. iii. 14 ff.

Elsewhere he prays that the Colossians may be "strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory," that is, with the highest attainable degree of spiritual force; as he exhorts the Corinthians, in a few terse words which are like an echo from the Old Testament, to "quit themselves like men and to grow strong;"¹ or he reminds one who represents him in the government of a Church, that the Spirit which God had given to them both was a spirit "not of timorousness, but of power." He, if any man, had a right to speak thus, being pre-eminently a strong man; no weakling swayed by fitful impulses, "purposing according to the flesh," saying first Yes and then No, soon frightened, easily talked over, unable to hold his own, with no backbone, as we say, in his character. Some physical infirmity he had, and freely acknowledged its distressing and humiliating effects; but he had learned to glory in it as an occasion for the manifestation of Christ's power as "made perfect in his own weakness": he felt that he had strength for all things in Him who was thus filling him with power.² Moral and spiritual strength, secured by moral and spiritual union with God through Christ, is a thought habitual to St. Paul, who here, as elsewhere, reproduces the

¹ With ἀνδρίζεσθε, 1 Cor. xvi. 13, cp. Deut. xxxi. 6; Joshua x. 25; Dan. x. 19, in LXX. The accompanying verb in the Greek of the latter texts, ἰσχύω, is not so emphatic as St. Paul's κραταιοῦσθε.

² Combine 2 Cor. xii. 9 with Phil. iv. 13.

warnings of his Master as to the imperative necessity of confessing Him before men at all costs, and of mastering all fear in such a cause. The firmness which His service will require is only attainable through a faith which overcomes, "as seeing the Invisible." It is by a resolutely practical recognition of the supremacy of the unseen and eternal that Christians are to put on the whole armour of God; but as faith energizes through love, it is a loyal response to the infinite love of Christ which is the principle of power for His athletes, His soldiers, His *men*.

But if Christianity does thus insist on strength, why has it been repeatedly disparaged as a religion fit only for weak and feminine natures, or even as having a distinctly enervating effect both on the intellect and on the will? This is, in fact, a very old story: the pagan Icelanders of the tenth century had "a strong feeling that the teaching of the White" or Fair "Christ would weaken the arm of those who listened to it;"¹ and in the first age of English Christianity two East-Saxon nobles, themselves professedly Christian, actually murdered their good king because, as they owned with savage frankness, he was wont to "pardon offences as soon as his pardon was craved."² But why go back to the rough Middle Ages, to the ferocious ideals which both resisted and tainted Christianity in Northern Europe, to the Celtic

¹ Maclear, "Conversion of the Northmen," p. 183.

² Bede, iii. 22.

blood-feuds handed on through generations? This prejudice is almost as modern as it is ancient: Italian vindictiveness has long been proverbial; and in certain English districts, pride and stubbornness, and tenacious remembrance of injuries, were long cherished as proofs of courage, and have not, perhaps, even yet lost all their credit; and elsewhere, and under very different social conditions, young souls entering upon adult life are told that if they clog themselves with religious scruples and restraints, they will never be free, and will never be practically *men*; and the falsehood thus dogmatically affirmed is accepted with only too facile assent, with a credence as blind as ever bowed to a superstition.

“But,” it will be said, “the prejudice, as you call it, is anyhow pretty general among men of the world, who keep their eyes open, and decline to be put into clerical leading-strings; there must be some foundation for it.” Well, it is partly due to the fact that Christianity has from the first deliberately canonized as virtues certain qualities which, in the estimation of heathenism, were not only scorned as weaknesses, but censured as flaws,—one might say, as vices,—such as gentleness, forbearance, humility, the abnegation of self-assertion and of self-will. “Not,” as it has been most truly said,¹ “that these were taught

¹ A. S. Wilkins, “The Light of the World,” p. 168. Of the cognate charge, that Christian morality is negative or passive, it has been said that “nearly half the New Testa-

to the exclusion of the robust virtues; to assert this were to impart a tone of effeminacy into Christian ethics utterly alien to it, and to do grievous dishonour to the example of the King of men. But on these, as on the long latent elements of a perfect virtue, the greater stress was naturally laid," and for a reason by no means obsolete; for these things not only were, but *are*, repugnant to "the old Adam" within us: and we may still meet with a particular conception of strength which, however unchristian, is in some men's eyes attractive. The strong man, they think, is one who elbows his way to foremost positions, makes himself felt by masterful resolve, gains his objects by sheer dominance of nature, by "the power of a strong will over a weak one;"—a coarse ideal this, barbaric, lawless, immoral, but one which suits the "untamed element in humanity." Others will say, as if from a higher platform,—“We grant you that it is a poor type of excellence, a vulgar and brutal conception of energy; we readily abandon it to your censure; but there is another kind of strength which is independent of your religious presumptions,—still more, of your artificial creeds and your ecclesiastical apparatus,—but which even you must admit to possess some ethical value. A man may have his own standard of right and wrong, his own intelligible rules of conduct, and may conform

ment" might be quoted in refutation.—Shairp, "Studies in Poetry and Philosophy," p. 387.

to them with loyal consistency, while yet they may be founded on a sense of what is due to himself as a member of society, or simply as a rational being. He may think the idea of a personal God unprovable, and therefore may leave it out of the question of conduct; he can be morally strong without it, and may fairly claim that religious people should not do him the injustice of supposing that his hold on virtue must be precarious, because, being a man of his own time, he cannot accept their antiquated theology."

Something like this is said, and doubtless is really meant; what answer can be given from the Christian point of view?

Religion, assuredly, does not create morality, but rather morality underlies religion, and gives us the deepest reason that we have for believing in a God who is real and living because He has moral character. This reason does not pretend to be scientific; science can neither prove God nor disprove Him; in fact, a God who could be thus proved would not *be* a God for us; but a moral argument of this sort may have a suasion which science cannot exercise.¹ Religion, then, must have an ethical basis, but it acts in its turn on the ethical idea. It takes morality by the hand, leads it onward, fills in its outlines, gives it colour, so to speak, and emphasis, the animating force of loftier motives,

¹ On the assumption, often implied rather than expressed, that "no evidence which is not scientific has any value," see Mozley, "Univ. Sermon," p. 59.

the new inspiration that comes with a widened outlook. If we could imagine a world like ours going on without a moral ruler, what should we see in it? Surely, as Dr. Mozley has expressed it, a morality impoverished and "stunted."¹ If the faculty which realizes the unseen, and takes hold of the sovereign "thought of God," is anyhow "atrophied," morality suffers by the weakening of its impulse and by the contraction of its area. For instance, how can a conscience unaware of the meaning of sin be as sensitive to evil in itself, not to say in others, as one which knows sin to be the worst enemy of its peace? No, belief in God is required to perfect the idea of duty, the conviction of the "ought" in man; without it the sense of moral freedom and responsibility will be, at least, very seriously impaired, and human passion will sweep out of its course restraints which are but of the earth and of time, as the hailstorm in the prophet's vision breaks down the wall that was "daubed" rather than built. In some quarters unbelief seems often pessimistic; it fixes its gaze on the iron and clay of the "image," and hardly recognizes the gold or the silver. But we Christians have been taught, not indeed to idolize humanity, but still to respect it, as retaining amid all its "corruption" the dignity of a "creation in the image of God." We believe that "life grows cheap as faith, and the hope that is born of faith, expire;"² as they revive, they give us a

¹ "Univ. Serm.," p. 53.

² Baldwin Brown, "The Higher Life," p. 49.

new spring of upward movement ; they urge us to think more worthily of our destiny, as they stir us to respond to the ennobling purpose of our Creator. It is thus that dependence on the Highest, understood and accepted, lifts men higher, and yet again higher ; the first article of faith, "I believe in God," bringing along with it, as consistently it does, the idea of a revelation and of a Christ, puts all facts of life into their right places ; and obedience to such a God, and loyalty to such a Christ, mean so much more of strength to the soul which will thus ascertain, by an experience too personal to be disowned, that in the service of God, and of man, as St. Paul would say, "in God," is the only perfect freedom. For strength comes to those who are where they were meant to be, at their post and at their work ; not left to their own guiding, but watched and ruled and cared for by the Supreme ; they, and they only, understand what for others is a paradox, "When I am weak, then I am strong,"—because strong in the service and the grace of the Father, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, the Three who are One. The sum of all then is, that the question whether moral strength has or has not any dependence upon religion runs up, like so many others, into the great original question, "Have we a God?"

We answer, of course, that we have One, and that as Christians we know more of Him than prophets or psalmists knew of old ; but in the magnificent psalm which contains our text,

which a good English bishop of Stuart times¹ repeated frequently on his death-bed, and which perhaps more than any other foreshadows the Christian vision of the Divine character, it is after he has sung of the Lord as continuously merciful to those that fear Him, and remember His commandments to do them, that the poet goes on to speak of the holy angels as combining the excellence of strength with the excellence of loyalty. Scripture, alike by distinct statement and in imagery, represents that highest order of God's servants as "great in power," as reflecting in their very presence somewhat of the awful majesty of the Most High. And the text gives us this invaluable suggestion, that if they are so august, it is because they are so thoroughly dutiful; and our Lord has taught us to regard their obedience as a pattern for our own—"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." And they who so do that will in heaven are said to hearken to the voice of their Lord, and to be strong and glorious by obeying it.

Here then is the practical question for us: Do we intend to hearken to that voice in our consciences, to ask at each turn of life what the Lord would have us to do? In little things, as they may seem, in details trivial and commonplace, we may ask this question of Him to whom nothing is great and nothing little, and shall certainly not fail to get an answer; and when it comes, let us promptly act upon it.

¹ Bishop Sanderson.

Every case of such obedience will be a case of increase in moral ability ; for “they that ” thus “wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.” We shall feel that our past failures, our lapses, our turnings back in the day of battle, our attempts to avoid Nineveh by sailing to Tarshish, have been caused by our neglect of the grace which would have been power. We shall go back to our “mighty God” for reinforcement ; and then only shall we be able to take to ourselves the cheering words of an archangel to one who had set his heart to chasten himself before his God—“Fear not, peace be unto thee ; be strong, yea, be strong.”¹

¹ Dan. x. 19.

XXVII

Victory through Purity

Rev. vii. 13, 14: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

CHURCH people in general are accustomed to regard the first of November as the typical festival of its class: great preachers and Christian poets have set forth in vivid language its signal claim on devout and thankful observance. "We mingle together," says one, "in the brief remembrance of an hour, all the choicest deeds, the holiest lives, the noblest labours" (that is, of human beings like ourselves) "which the sun ever saw;"¹ and another, who looked at religious questions from a very different standpoint, and whom we hardly knew as a singer of Israel until he had been taken from us,² helps us to think, on All Saints'

¹ Newman, "Sermons," ii. 393.

² The Rev. E. Hatch.

day, of the vast and splendid variety which marks this collective work of God's grace on human character :

“Saints of the early morn of Christ,
 Saints of imperial Rome ;
 Saints of the cloistered Middle Age,
 Saints of the modern home
 Saints who were wafted to the skies
 In the torment-robe of flame ;
 Saints who have graven on men's thoughts
 A monumental name ;”—

saints also whom no calendar celebrates, whose light shone merely in out-of-the-way corners, whose influence shed its odour on “small circles,” whose work, in their own eyes, so often seemed a failure ;—

“Saints of the marts and busy streets,
 Saints of the squalid lanes ;
 Saints of the silent solitudes,
 Of the prairies and the plains,”

or, as Keble has it in his poem for the festival, of “many a hidden dell and rural nook.” All who under various conditions have been eminent servants of Christ are as one in the power of their examples, in the stimulus which their memory gives to Christian effort,—the effort of that same living and working faith, which drew them so close to the Lord who is “theirs and ours.” It is good for us to bear them thus in mind ; it is cheering,—as the poet goes on to say with wistful pathos,—when “our faith is waxing faint,” when “the lamp of” our “love

burns low." It is inspiring then to adopt the lofty words which our sister Church in Scotland has retained, with enrichments, from the first English Prayer-book, and to "give God most high praise and hearty thanks for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all His Saints, who have been the choice vessels of His grace, and the lights of the world in their several generations."¹

Courage of heart, and steadiness of hope; we need them both, He knows, more deeply, perhaps, at times than we should dare to confess to each other. Autumn was once called by a slowly dying authoress a "season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness:"² an influence which, on the whole, is melancholy, responsive to the sad music of the two words, "Passing away"; and Keble³ has accustomed us to find in it a symbol of that mournful law of disappointment,—as St. Paul speaks, of vanity,⁴—which makes its presence felt even within the area of the Spirit's Pentecostal operation. Alas, we say, that evil seems so often too strong for good! What begins well, say, in some young life, apparently rich in spiritual promise, is so often, so tragically, tainted, spoiled, and ruined: the parables of the Tares and of the Sower are so repeatedly

¹ Scottish Communion Office.

² Jane Austen, "Persuasion," vol. i. c. 10.

³ "Christian Year," Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity. Cp. "Lyra Apostolica," p. 171.

⁴ Rom. viii. 20.

verified by a painful experience, that we forget how the good seed is really growing in secret, how the sacred leaven, unseen, is really pervading and assimilating the mass. But if we do forget this, All Saints' day comes in to bring it home. In the noble words, so inspiring because so grave and restrained, of Dean Church,¹ we are reminded that "the visible presence of Divine Goodness in real human form," the form of One who was born of woman, who worked for years in a carpenter's shop, who went about with a few poor men, who died a criminal's death, but who rose again and ascended to His Father,—that Presence "has brought real inward goodness within reach, has made this world really a place where righteousness, and love, and purity should have a visible seat and home." If we want one broad and simple evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, let us look for it in All Saints, and so think of Christ more worthily.

But then, as Carlyle has said, "no man becomes a saint in his sleep."² These holy men and women,—these highest types of Christian character, these who were Christians beyond the average,—had kingdoms of darkness to subdue, had to be "made strong" (literally, to be empowered) "out of" or "from weakness;" it cost them something to wax valiant in fight, in the "good and noble contest of faith," and, in the deepest, most effective sense, to

¹ "On Civilization," etc., p. 185.

² "Past and Present," p. 46.

“turn to flight” whole “armies of the aliens.”¹ And so in the Patmos vision, St. John beholds the “multitude which no man could number, gathered out of every nation, and from tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms were in their hands;” he hears them ascribe “their salvation to their God and to the Lamb;” he is asked if he knows who they are; he answers, “Sir, thou knowest.” And then he is told these two things about them: “These have come out of the great tribulation” (literally, “that tribulation which is the great one”), and “They have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the” slain and living “Lamb.”

Here, then, is a condition of the saintly life: some great tribulation, some form of trying pressure; the vision refers, not, like that in the first part of the same chapter, to the saints of the first age, but to a far larger company, whose experience belongs severally to this or that period of the whole life of the Church militant. With none of them was saintliness a matter of smooth gradual evolution; they had their fightings and their fears, their wounds, their checks, yes, sometimes their falls; but though they fell, they arose:² it was hard work, and success seemed often uncertain; and of this they had had full warning. He in whom alone could Paul himself do more than conquer³ had pressed that

¹ Heb. xi. 33, 34.

² Mic. vii. 8.

³ Rom. viii. 37.

fact, with a gracious though stern insistence, on the consciousness of those who wished to follow Him; and in His charges to the Seven Churches, at the opening of this same mysterious book, the variety with which His final rewards are indicated contrasts significantly with the iteration of one and the same condition in every case: the tree of life, the hidden manna, the white raiment, the morning star, the assured place in the temple, the place on the very throne of Him who overcame and is seated with the Father,—are all alike reserved for “him that overcometh.”

“By this conquer” was, in the famous story, emblazoned on the luminous cross of an Emperor’s dream. “By this conquer” is spiritually “writ large” on the Cross, as gazed on, and as gloried in, by every soul that is trying to be faithful, striving its best to respond to grace, and not to grieve the Spirit of Christ. Is this at all true of us? The Saints here pictured, the foremost soldiers of the host, appear with palms in their hands, a link with the scene of their Lord’s “triumphal entry.” But they, in their day and place, only did more thoroughly what all who confess Christ are pledged to do. Every one of us is bound, by the very fact of baptism, to fight manfully, under Christ’s victorious banner, against sin, the world, and the devil. Are we making any true fight of it? Or are we placidly saying that we need not excite ourselves, that this “high-strung tone of the Church service”—yes,

and of the Bible—"is not quite applicable to times like ours;" or, at least, that if others have reason to be so spiritually strenuous, we need not specially trouble ourselves,—that our circumstances immerse us in this world's interests, that we cannot help it, but we hope some day to have time to think of another; meantime, that we always treat religion respectfully, and observe as many of its precepts as are in our business-life sufficiently practicable? No, this is surely not language for Christians; at the All Saints' festival, we must needs feel that it is not. We are capable of something better. If we believe at all in God, in Christ, in our own souls, in the world unseen, and in the eternal future, let us determine to take the right side, and accept any drawback, any difficulty, which Christian consistency may bring upon us, as just a bit of the tribulation through which we have to pass, but as not worthy to be compared with the pleasure of pleasing our Master.

And to take the right side, to act like faithful Christians, involves, as we learn from the "elder's" speech to the Apostle, the process of washing the robes, and washing them in the right way. As the All Saints' Gospel reminds us, it is the pure in heart who shall see God; as for those who will not become pure, how could they expect to see Him? how could heaven itself be other than a hell to them? Purity, in its distinctive sense, is a virtue on which Christianity, from the first, insisted with

an emphasis which must have astonished heathen outsiders,—a virtue which has a peculiar power of keeping the character sound and sweet, while the opposite vice is frightfully apt to poison, and, as Burns mournfully affirmed, to “petrify,” the whole of the inward man. But it should also be understood in the larger sense of a conscious comprehensive effort to subdue the flesh to the spirit,—to bring all lower and meaner desires into obedience to the higher nature, considered as longing after goodness, and laying itself open to the cleansing and lifting influence of the Spirit of holy love and holy fear. Such purity is what we must aim at, if we would not make our lives, morally and spiritually, mere instances of complete and unmistakably wretched failure. And failure of this sort is imprinted on so many lives: “nature,” as it calls itself, revolts so boldly against grace, against the law of God, against all restraint on its own impulses, especially against the seventh commandment; the claim of its wilfulness is asserted in a theory, as if some rightful freedom were involved in it. People say,—or think, if they say it not,—“We will be real, we will live the life that suits us.”¹ And that often means that master and

¹ The fullest liberty of divorce, it has been recently said, is demanded in America by persons who “are determined at all costs to be happy, and to make not one effort, but as many as circumstances may desire.”—“Contemp. Review,” Sept. 1897. Marriage is thus degraded into a mere social arrangement terminable on either side at will.

servant shall change places—that the lower self shall dominate the higher; and “the end thereof” is this, that belief in man, as a moral and spiritual being, is gradually eaten out, and the carnal mind, at enmity with God, and “rotting away” (in St. Paul’s terrible phrase) “according to the lusts of deceit,”¹ acquiesces in sheer animalism. Let us be sure that the cause of human dignity is the cause of the spirit *versus* the flesh; we are degraded by all that makes us the slaves of moral corruption.² Let us seek to be kept out of that bondage; let us pray—being sure that we shall not pray in vain—for a hearty sympathy with the purposes of God, for a genuine wish to be made pure, since to make ourselves pure is simply impossible: cleanness of thought, and mind, and will, of speech and of act, comes only from contact with the one Fountain opened for uncleanness, the precious Blood that cleanseth from all sin. Perhaps we may recollect a beautiful anthem which, while embodying the words of this context, reiterates significantly the sphere of the washing of robes: “*In* the blood—*in* the blood—the blood of the Lamb.” Let us have recourse to that same source of purification; let us take the remembrance of past sins straight up to the throne of our only Saviour, and implore Him to repeat, in our case, the touch which He laid on one who was full of leprosy;³ let us resolve, in His strength,

¹ Eph. iv. 22.² 2 Pet. ii. 19.³ St. Luke v. 12.

to watch more earnestly against all the temptations which have heretofore soiled the array of the soul. To watch in that spirit is, so far, to play the part of a good soldier of Jesus Christ; the more care we take for this supreme object, the more shall we advance in His favour, the stronger shall we become to resist His foe and ours, and the whiter will our garments show in the splendour of His face,—we may dare to say, of His smile. And at last, if we can but persevere, what will the trials of this world look like, when we too shall have come out of our tribulation, with all our spots and stains effaced by the merits of His Passion, and the renewing power of His Spirit? How infinitely worth while will it then appear to have loyally striven for a few years of mortal life, if at the end we take our place amid those who have won the victory, and can walk in white for ever with our own immaculate Lord!¹

¹ Christians may well take a lesson from the noble aspiration of Sophocles in "Œd. Tyr." 863 ff.:

"O may the lot be mine for aye to keep
The purity that men revere
Through all my words and deeds, in duteous fear
Of laws that walk 'on heaven's high steep.'"

XXVIII

Love to God

30
St. Mark xii. ~~24~~: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

ONE of the most beautiful collects in the Prayer-book is that in which we are taught to pray, "Pour into our hearts such love towards Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire." Our translated collects not seldom add new features to their originals, and seldom omit any; and we cannot but wonder that, whereas this collect in its old Latin wording asked for grace to love God "in all things and above all things,"¹ the latter clause was left out in four editions of the Prayer-book, and was only restored in the last revision at the expense of the former. It was a loss to omit either; but it is matter of regret that, when a good opportunity occurred in 1661, the full wording was not replaced, but only one short-

¹ "Ut te in omnibus et super omnia diligentes." See H. A. Wilson, "Gelasian Sacramentary," p. 224.

ened form substituted for another, apparently because it seemed more intelligible.¹ For the combination represented a great truth, and gave, so to speak, a complete view. All things that are lovable,—more especially all persons who are rightly objects of love,—are, so far, types of Him whom we are to love with heart and soul and mind and strength, with the whole energy of our being; we are to see Him in them, and look through them to Him, and also to appreciate the supremacy of His peculiar claim on our affection, and to aim at loving Him best.

Still, the collect as it stands may well be dear to us: and when we have gone through a week with it, we take up another which carries on the same thought; we pray “the Author and Giver of all good things to graft in our hearts the love of His Name,” that is, of Himself as He is revealed to us, as a personal Being with a character. We are so much accustomed to think of Old Testament religion as mainly a religion of awe, of distant reverence, of an obedience hardly filial, that we forget how the Psalter absolutely glows and burns with genuine love for God’s name, for God’s commandments, for God’s testimonies,—as we might say, for whatever serves as a reminder of His presence,—yes, and for His own very Self. “I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength;” “I love the Lord;” “O love the Lord, all ye His

¹ In the “Black-letter Prayer-book” used by the revisers “in” is scored out, and “above” substituted.

saints ;” “O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil.” Here is “affection fastening itself, with the most natural freshness and simplicity,” on the manifestations of the Divine mind, and through them and beyond them on a Divine personality : an affection at once “exulting” and “reverent,” both “tender and manly,” and “intensely human” throughout.¹ And if it was possible to those earlier worshippers,—if its absence would have been impossible to the worthiest types of Hebrew piety,—how much more natural ought it to be to those for whom it was written, that “God commendeth His own love towards us” precisely “in this, that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us ;” and that His claim on our gratitude and devotion is so unique and so imperative, that if any Christian man, knowing who He is and what He has done for us, loves Him not, he will justly be “anathema” at the Lord’s second coming ! It has been excellently said,² that “in addition to all the characteristics of Hebrew monotheism” which evoked in responsive souls a strong and genuine “individual attachment” to the God of their fathers, the God of so many deliverances and forbearances, there exists in the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Cross “a peculiar and inexhaustible treasure for the affectionate feelings.” The idea of the God-Man as the

¹ Church, “Gifts of Civilization,” etc., p. 430. See the whole of the exquisite context.

² By Arthur Henry Hallam.

Redeemer is the most powerful of all appeals to the human heart, the leverage which alone was wanted to move the moral world.

We say this,—it has been said a thousand times; we read it approvingly in books; we think it both true and beautiful; but do we analyze the idea with sufficient accuracy to exclude mistakes as to what this love for God and for Christ does in truth involve and require?

One mistake lies on the surface: let us observe, first, what is *not* properly a constituent of this great principle of regenerated character. Devotional books of a foreign type, and still more frequently, high-strung language in hymns offered for congregational use, are apt to mislead persons into a supposition that there can be no real love for God without a peculiar intensity of spiritual emotion; and if they are conscious that they do not feel such emotion, they conclude that they are in no sense whatever fulfilling the first and great commandment. In “revivalist” gatherings it is even thought right to work up the feelings by methods which, in the last resort, are physical rather than spiritual,—to extort, as it were, by loud importunity, and by the infection pervading an excited crowd, professions that Christ has been accepted, and that the soul has found peace. It is forgotten that such transports “come and go,”¹ and that their presence is no test of that love which God looks for; that justification by a

¹ See above, p. 26.

living faith does not mean justification by warm feelings; that religious emotion is a good servant when kept well in hand and at its work, but a bad master;¹ that, to use the words of a great parish priest, who had a specially keen eye for religious unreality or unhealthiness, "people lay so much stress on feelings, and imagine that because they have susceptible nerves they are on the road to heaven, [whereas] the great thing is simply to be desirous to do God's will []"² and this desire [] is in fact a desire to love Him, and is reckoned by Him as incipient love, even although the soul should be distressed by what it takes to be spiritual dryness, but which may, by God's blessing on faithful patience, be turned into "springs of water."³

A more serious difficulty has been made as to whether love for God ought not to be wholly independent of hope of His "rewards." Men have assumed that if "pure," it must needs be utterly regardless of "self-interest." The term is ambiguous, and therefore requires cross-questioning; what "self" are we thinking of, and what kind of "interest" is in question? Undoubtedly those promises of which we say, in the very collect which asks for power to love God above all things, that they "exceed all that we can desire," have nothing to do with objects which attract the

¹ Liddon, "Easter Sermons," i. 265.

² "Life and Letters of Dean Butler," p. 378.

³ Isa. xxxv. 7.

lower nature, or, as St. Paul would say, the "flesh." What they point to is a state of mind and heart which issues in eternal life, in what we comprehensively call salvation. And salvation, as Christians believe, is man's supreme good; and for a man not to desire and aim at his supreme good is to be false to his own humanity. But to desire salvation in its true and full sense is, first, to desire that entire moral union with God which absolutely excludes all "selfishness," and also to desire that others, as many as possible, may share with us in that beatitude;¹ and this twofold desire is simply a condition of Christian goodness, the fulfilment of a necessary law of our being, when elevated and transfigured into an obligation created by our faith. Thus, in Bishop Butler's words,² "the question whether

¹ Cf. Dean Paget, "Studies in the Christian Character," p. xxxiv.

² "Sermons," 13 and 14. Fénelon, in his "Instruction sur le pur Amour," places the man who loves God because of His perfection, *and* because He is "béatifiant" for himself, on a lower level than the man who would love God just as much if he did *not* believe Him to be "béatifiant." The latter, he says, wishes for his own salvation purely because God "veut qu'il la veuille;" he is in no sense seeking his own interest; he loves himself only "comme un étranger, et pour aimer ce que Dieu a fait" ("Œuvres," i. 305). Where does the New Testament support these flights? Fénelon evidently differs from Butler, who regards "reasonable self-love" as actually a "part of the idea of virtue" ("Anal." i. c. 5; cp. "Sermon" 12), whereas Fénelon seems to have treated any regard to "interest" as more or less "mercenary" (Jervis's "Hist. Ch. France," ii. 137). It is needless to say which is the sounder view. On "altruistic" extravagances see

we ought to love God for His sake or for our own" is "a mere mistake in language": we *must* long for that "somewhat, which may fill up all our capacities of happiness," and "in which our souls may find rest;" and that somewhat, that Some One, "may be to us all that we want," so that no kind of good which would promote our true happiness can be conceived of as attainable outside Him; and heaven itself is not merely a gift of His, it is constituted by His Presence.

But now let us ask what *is* required to constitute true love for God as He shines forth in Christ our Saviour? Three things may be specified.

First, a due sense of His infinite perfection. Moral excellence is moral beauty, and as such, attracts and retains love. Even heathen wisdom, in its transient glimpses of high truth, could say that justice was "fairer than the morning or evening star," that "to behold virtue in its perfection would be itself the fulness of joy."¹

Next, there will be thankfulness for the goodness, kindness, "philanthropy"² of God,

Mozley, "Univ. Serm.," p. 74. The reference to "heaven" and "a reward" in the beautiful hymn, "My God, I love Thee," etc., which an average congregation can hardly use without some risk of unreality, seems to favour the mistaken notion that complete union with God, and personal beatitude, are separable things, whereas they are *one* thing.

¹ Arist., "Eth.," v. i. 15; Cic., "de Fin.," v. 24.

² Tit. iii. 4.

as exhibited towards ourselves; that "love" which culminated in the gift of which St. John could say with that restrained energy which is so peculiarly impressive, "Herein is love," and "God so loved the world." It is, as Dr. Arnold said, "hard to believe that our own single individual soul is and ever has been the direct object of the infinite love of the most high God; yet this we are warranted, nay, we are commanded to believe; and . . . if this truth once takes possession of our hearts, then are we redeemed indeed."¹ Sometimes Christmas or Holy Week brings home the thought to us: in other states of mind we are in the first instance best helped to grasp it by looking back into our personal experience, and remembering how we have been "dealt with,"² spared, watched over, compassed about,—how even troubles have proved themselves "grace-tokens."³ If we will but honestly open our minds to indications of God's love, they will not be long in coming,—they will surround us, like the angelic chariots in Dothan.

But once more, love for God requires, as we have seen, a serious purpose of conformity to His will. Our love for a parent, or for an elder friend to whom we look up, is not worth much unless it makes us endeavour to please them. And this purpose may be grave and calm, and incapable of expressing itself

¹ "Christian Life, its Hopes, Fears, and Close," p. 329.

² "Silas Marner," p. 126.

³ Newman in "Lyra Apostolica," p. 26.

in the language of excitement, but may, all the same, be essentially "fervour"; as the Apostle of love defines love for God to be "the keeping of His commandments," which will not seem "grievous" to a heart that is open towards Him. Here is the point—that the will should be enlisted in His service, that no room should be left in us for a graceless self-will which would treat God as representing a rival interest, construe His laws as strictly as a penal statute, insist on reserving this point and marking off that ground, and thereby forfeit the joy of a frankly complete self-surrender. This is, in fact, the Pharisaic or legalist idea of duty, which St. Paul alludes to in his assertion that "the letter killeth." So long as God is thought of as a Forbidder rather than a Father,—so long as His commands are read as simply prohibitory,—we cannot put our wills into the task of obeying them, and love for them is out of the question; whereas it is just this love which is the vitalizing power of "spiritual" service.

And how is it, then, with us? If we are to be honest with ourselves, do we not often feel a sting of shame, and perhaps a cold fit of despondency, when we hear that to love God means this, and nothing short of it? Why are we so cold and dull towards the God in whom we say that we believe? Three reasons may be suggested.

First, there is the absorption in things visible and secular, which is doubtless a special impedi-

ment to spiritual aspiration amid the complex demands of modern life, which make it harder than ever to keep the thought of God in its right place, as central and supreme. When the mind and heart are full of schemes and aims purely secular, it seems forced and unnatural to bring in the thought of an eternal world. Our instinct says, "That is not to the present purpose;" the fact being that the idea of it strikes us as intrusive. The earthly lights form such a dazzling circle, that in the midst of them the heavenly light looks pale and austere. It is anything but easy then to discover amid a throng of temporal interests the royal presence of our spiritual King. It is love alone which can then look out, as it were, from the fishing-boat to a figure standing on the familiar beach, and say at once, "It is the Lord."

To this may be added a vague, indistinct, ineffective mode of thinking about the person, the life, the character, of our Lord Jesus Christ. Persons assume that they know already as much as they need know—more, perhaps, they say, than can strictly be verified—as to what He said and did, why He came, what were His objects, what effect He produced on men. They do not try to fill in the outlines of the sketch which their memory retains; they do not care to understand what the Gospel account means, to gain a definite idea of Him, to "learn" Him, in the pregnant phrase of the Apostle, so that for them "the great Name"

may "no longer stand for an abstract symbol of doctrine, but for a living Master, who can teach as well as save."¹

And thirdly, and this is *the* great antagonist to love, they—how often has it been *we*?—are kept back from a vital approach to God by a love of what St. John calls the world, and, more precisely yet, by the fascination of some besetting sin. *That* is our secret "grievance" against His commandments: it makes us wish Him to be other than He is; we come near to resenting His severity of moral judgment; we dislike to be recalled from our own way by "the remembrance of His holiness"; and so we lose, by degrees, the very capacity of loving Him. It is the perversion of will that produces this deadening coldness; if we can only bring our wills within the great circle of God's will, and ask to have no will counter to His, it will be "as if the walls had fallen down that shut us out from" Him.²

If we wish, then, to love God, let us watch against these three hindrances. And let us bear in mind always, as we set our mind on gaining love for Him, that love for our brethren, which we commonly call charity, is not only inseparable from it, but a very effectual help towards the attainment of it. St. John's well-known question implies as much; and Butler, at the end of his sermons on "the Love

¹ Church, "The Oxford Movement," p. 168.

² "Scenes of Clerical Life," p. 285 ("Janet's Repentance").

of our Neighbour," expressly prays, "Help us, by cultivating within ourselves the love of our neighbour, to improve in the love of Thee." We can clearly see how, for we can all the more vividly apprehend the Divine lovableness when we think of the faithful human tenderness which has brightened and sweetened our life, and pointed back to the eternal fountain from which it flows, so as repeatedly to make us ask, "If this dear friend can love me so much, what must God's love be?" Thus will the lower love minister to the higher, and the higher in turn add strength and purity to the lower; as St. Augustine says, "Blessed is he who loveth Thee, and his friend in Thee; for he alone loses none that are dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him that cannot be lost;"¹ or in the words of an English poet—

"He who loves God all else above,
His own shall also clasp
In circles ampler far of love
Than weaker arms can grasp:
And farther down through space and time
His sympathies descend, and climb."²

¹ "Confessions," iv. 14.

² Aubrey de Vere.

XXIX

The Safeguard of Love

Phil. i. 9 (R. V.): "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment."

IT is a remark of Dr. Liddon's, that this is the "brightest" of all the letters of St. Paul.¹ It verifies that summary account of himself as "alway rejoicing" which he had given five years before to the Church of Corinth. Here and there, indeed, a shadow intercepts his mental sunshine: we seem to hear the outburst of weeping which accompanies his reference to the "many" professing Christians whose audacious revolt against Christian morality had rendered them "*the* enemies of the cross of Christ." But generally speaking, the Epistle exhibits the natural buoyancy of his disposition as exalted into the spiritual grace of "joy"; and it is interesting to see how applicable to him is the estimate which a great writer has made of the characteristic charm of temperament in a saint who was his enthusiastic

¹ "Advent Sermons," i. 283.

admirer and sympathetic interpreter. Like St. Chrysostom, the Apostle of the Gentile world "colours everything about him with his own sweet, cheerful, thankful temper, makes the best of what is bad, blots out the trials of the past, looks round at all things with a kindly spirit," and thinks of his friends with an "affectionateness" which is precious because it is "discriminating."¹ He is writing in Rome, under military custody; but he "puts the best face" on all his surroundings;² his detention has really tended to the progress of the gospel by making it known throughout the Prætorian quarters, and given him an opportunity of winning subjects for Christ among the household servants of Nero. True, again, that his persistent Judaizing antagonists are counter-working him by their own partisan preaching of Christianity; but anyhow, in whatever spirit, from whatever motive, the Name that is above every name *is* being proclaimed, and in that he rejoices, "yea, and will rejoice." Or, still more directly, he takes pleasure in thanking the Philippians for the contributions sent through Epaphroditus, whose recovery from serious illness he ascribes to a twofold mercy: he assures them that now he "has all he wants in full measure, even in abundance," and that,

¹ Newman, "Historical Sketches," iii. 264, 286.

² Part of the crypt of S. Maria in Via Lata (near the south end of the Corso) is traditionally called St. Paul's lodging; and one of its columns has the appropriate inscription, "Verbum Dei non est alligatum" (2 Tim. ii. 9).

were it otherwise, he has learned, as they too may learn, "the secret of being contented either amid abundance or in need:" it is, he intimates, the "strengthening" presence of Christ which is a perpetual spring of cheerful equanimity. And such equanimity,—such a brave readiness to take everything as somehow a gift, to withstand the temptations which haunt prosperity and adversity, to be neither presumptuous amid "fulness" nor morose amid "straitness,"—would naturally produce a corresponding steadiness of mind. St. Paul is in himself a complete proof that sensitive natures can acquire balance, composure, self-control. In him is fulfilled the promise that he who relies on the "cornerstone" as a "sure foundation shall not make haste,"—that is, he will not be "soon shaken from his ordinary state of mind," to use an expressive phrase in one of the earliest Pauline letters;¹ he will not, as we should say, be upset and flurried by this or that difficulty in a "scheme" which he knows to be even yet "imperfectly comprehended"; he will not talk of being "driven to reconsider his position" because he cannot intellectually harmonize one aspect of Christian doctrine with another; he will not cut the knot by treating a part as if it were the whole. Nothing is easier, and nothing more profitless, than to deal in clean-cutting antitheses, which put, for instance, religion in opposition to theology, or spirit to form, or a "life" to a "creed"; which say in

¹ Isa. xxviii. 16; 2 Thess. ii. 2.

effect, "Not a Church but a Saviour," or, from other points of view, "Not Paul but Jesus," or, "If Christ is man, He is not God," or reversely. All this means impatience, which tries to look vigorous and decisive, but is really weak, and has been the parent of all misbelief and heresy. St. Paul is never more effective as a teacher than when he presents to us a combination of principles, each momentous, but neither self-sufficing; he does not pretend that we can intellectually correlate them; he simply tells us to hold them both. So it is in this Epistle: to "have the mind set on earthly things" is treated as a mark of practical apostasy; and yet, in a passage which speedily follows, the Apostle removes any ambiguity which might attach to that phrase, and foster the growth of a rigorist fanaticism. There are hardly any words in all his writings more exhilarating than those in which he bids the Philippians "take full account of whatever things are true, or venerable, or just, or pure, or lovable, or of good report, if there be any virtue, and if," consequently, "there be any praise." As much as to say, The gospel of the Crucified and Risen can open its arms to all that is healthful in culture, or pure in literature, or worthy in enterprise, or noble and elevating in the whole range of human interests: enter into all this, claim it for Christ, and you will find that He has a blessing and a sanction for every part of it; you need not, as Christians, hold aloof from it as belonging to "this present

evil world.”¹ Other instances might be given,² but it is more to our present purpose to dwell on that remarkable context in which the Apostle brings the heart, so to speak, into relation with the mind and the conscience. He is sure of the Philippians’ affection for him even as he “holds them in his heart”; he thinks, no doubt, of Lydia and the other women in the Jewish oratory by the river-side, and of the convert jailor who had washed his stripes and set food before him: from “the first day” of his intercourse with them, they have poured out on him their most effective sympathy: he cannot but regard them, so he afterwards says in a fresh burst of tenderness, as “his beloved and longed for, his joy and crown,” and yet again, “his beloved.” Yes, they do love him heartily—that is well understood, as we feel when we write to our closest friends; but then he wants their love to take a particular form. Affectionateness like theirs is meant to *do* something; it must not spend itself in emotion or expression; it needs a safeguard which may consolidate it into a power. What shall that safeguard be? We might expect him to say, as St. John does say,³ Let it be the means by which your love may rise up to God; but here he is thinking not so much of Godward

¹ Gal. ii. 4; a point of contact with the language of St. John xv. 18; xvii. 14; 1 John ii. 15.

² *E. g.* Phil. ii. 12, 13, where the divine and human sides of the process of salvation are brought together, as in 2 Thess. iii. 3, 4.

³ 1 John iv. 12.

activity as of a certain effect on the mind and the moral sense. Let your love flow on, he says, as fully and strongly as may be, but in a definite channel, not like a flood that will sink into the soil. And the channel has two lines. First, the line of such knowledge of Divine truth as is accurate, penetrating, and progressive.¹ Do we ask what this has to do with affection? It has much to do with it. In the case of persons, it is love which enables us to know them more and more intimately; in the case of studies, it is our liking for them which makes us advance in them. In both cases, it is feeling which serves as the stimulus, and which thereby is kept up as a living force. Apply this to the study of Christian truth. The greatest theologians, such as Athanasius or Augustine, have been men set on fire with love for God and for souls; and this has been the impelling and sustaining principle of their theological work. Similarly in the consideration of what are called Christian evidences, it has been most truly observed, that the moral and spiritual affections are as "instruments" by which those evidences are appreciated; they themselves are "a kind of understanding" or "intelligence";² they are presupposed in

¹ On ἐπίγνωσις, see Dean Paget, "The Spirit of Discipline," p. 112 ff. He observes that this term for "larger and more thorough knowledge" occurs more frequently in the later than in the earlier letters of St. Paul. In the Pastoral Epistles it is four times associated with "truth."

² Mozley, "Lectures," pp. 9, 291.

the appeal made either by morality or by religion.

But the safeguard has another aspect as well. There is a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews which of itself would show that the writer was "of the school of St. Paul."¹ The "milk" of rudimentary Christian teaching is said to be fit for those who are "inexperienced"; but the "strong food" of more "complete" instruction belongs to persons religiously "full-grown, who through habit have their perceptions exercised to distinguish good from evil."² The word "perception," used in the Epistle to the Philippians, means that sure and delicate instinct which enables a man to say decisively, "This is right and that is wrong," and at once to brush aside that web of "fatal imposture"³ which makes good and evil change names, and bewitches the moral sense with "Fair is foul and foul is fair." No evidence of an inherited corruption is more impressive than this ever-recurring perversion of ethical language, which, whether in the first years of Isaiah, or amid the wild party-fights and the rhetorical schools of Greece, or the cynical profligacies of the Roman empire, or wherever in Christendom fashion or interest has popularized a vice or cried down a virtue, wherever the young or the easy-going could be misled, or the hands of the wicked could be strengthened by sophistry,—has been

¹ Newman, "Sermons," ii. 191. ² Heb. v. 12-14.

³ See South's sermon on "The Fatal Imposture and Force of Words," in vol. i. p. 450 ff.

renewing the stress of the original temptation, and "diffusing an atmosphere" of moral decay and "death."¹ Against this enormous and terribly vivacious evil the moral judgment or "perception," or discernment, has to be fore-armed; and how? Not by a list of minute rules to be learnt by heart and referred to on occasion, but by principles to be assimilated and applied. No doubt there will be difficulties in complex questions of conscience, and these will create a certain sphere for the use of casuistry. But that sphere has limits to be somewhat jealously guarded.² For casuists and their disciples are alike prone to substitute cut-and-dried prescriptions, which save trouble, for the personal exercise of moral perceptions, which costs trouble, though it "pays" in the long run, and with interest. And here we see how un-Pauline, how anti-Pauline, is that system of "direction" which the Jesuit theory of life and conduct has imposed on devout minds in the Roman Church. It suspects and dreads all freedom; it will never leave a soul to itself; it precludes, as far as possible, all personal judgment and choice;³ it aims at keeping the man, or, more frequently, the woman, in a condition of moral and religious childhood. To say that this contradicts St. Paul is not

¹ Isa. v. 20; Thucyd., iii. 82; Aristotle, "Rhet.," i. 9; Tacitus, "Germ.," 19; Trench, "Study of Words," p. 48.

² Church, "Essays and Reviews," p. 565; Strong, "Bampton Lectures," p. 353.

³ "Church Quarterly Review," xviii. 137.

enough; we know who asked the significant question, "Why do ye not, even of yourselves, judge what is right?"¹ It is not the New Testament which bids Christians to continue "children in understanding": that fatal stumbling-block has been set in the path by men doubtless earnest for religion as they understood it, but devoted to a warped and one-sided form of moral training, which simply prevented the development of character into "the stature of the fulness of Christ."

And love, directed towards all truly love-worthy objects, and above all to God in Christ, is to assist, instead of arresting, that development by means of a pure ideal and a standard which represents true rectitude. The Philippians, for instance, might say, "What a life is that of Paul! what a life must His have been whom Paul follows and represents, whom he has taught us to love and to adore! Can we do better than to conform our thoughts about conduct, our ways of judging and choosing, to those which are embodied in such a character?" And thus their power of loving, the intensity of their affection, would clear away all mists from their faculty of discernment; they would solve all doubts by the one loyal question, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"

Such is the double safeguard which, according to St. Paul, will preserve love from dribbling away into sentimentalism. If we feel aught of that attraction which through all these

¹ St. Luke xii. 57.

Christian ages has been exercised over responsive souls by Him who once for all was lifted up, let us use it as a stimulus to learning more and more of Him, and of the full import of His teaching, and becoming more and more perceptive, on each occasion that calls for a practical choice, of the direction in which His hand beckons, whom we shall have come to regard as a "Conscience Incarnate."¹ Such "waiting on the Lord" will not fail of its promised result,² the renewal of strength for work in which otherwise we might grow "weary": and in all our studies of His sanctifying truth, and all our conclusions as to the course which He would approve, we shall find that love, thus put to practical uses, will "abound" like the stream in the prophet's vision,³ that flowed from beneath the altar of God, and rose higher and ever higher, bringing life wherever it came.⁴

¹ Wace, "Christianity and Morality," p. 249.

² Isa. xl. 31.

³ Ezek. xlvii. 1-9.

⁴ The sense of the words that follow the text is probably best given by R. V., "so that ye may approve the things that are excellent." Moral perception is to advance in refinement and exactness until it can select, by testing, as Bengel says, "in bonis optima."

XXX

The Christian Corporate Life

Phil. iii. 20: "For our conversation is in heaven."

THE word "for" in this sentence connects it with that characteristic expression of indignant grief which had been called forth from St. Paul by a combination, in too many cases, of Christian profession with a very practical Antinomianism. There were those who had misread spiritual liberty as if it meant a "license to sin." What they really worshipped, says the Apostle, was their own sensual appetite; they were not ashamed of it, they rather gloried in it; their minds were set on the things of earth, and could take in nothing higher. This latter fact explains their whole condition; they could not aspire, they could not entertain any worthier ideal; their "walk," the drift of their whole conduct, must needs be downward. St. Paul then draws out the contrast between their habitual aim and that of the consistent Christian. They are earthly-minded, he says: you must not be as they are, you must observe them in order to avoid them; for, as for us,—but then comes

the difficulty as to the right rendering of the word which the Authorized Version represents by "conversation" in the old English sense of "conduct." Neither this translation, nor the "citizenship" of the Revised Version, seems to suit the terms of the sentence. A mode of behaviour, or type of character, or a condition or status involving "civic" rights or duties, could hardly be spoken of as actually "existent" in this or that quarter. Something less abstract is wanted: and "commonwealth" is probably the right word,¹ suggesting as it does all the corporate life, in a spiritual sense, which belongs to the city or kingdom of God; and this interpretation is, at any rate, supported by the well-known text in an earlier epistle, "The Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother."²

Before going further, let us observe a significant feature of the "manner" of St. Paul. When he is condemning a class of special sins, he does not content himself with pointing to their opposites in a class of special virtues: he does just hint at his own way of life, or of "walking," as a pattern; but having to emphasize the fact that in the Gospel religion is inseparable from morality, he lifts the question into a broader atmosphere than that of personal well-doing; he

¹ Bishop Ellicott adopts this rendering. Eusebius, in the preface to his fifth book, calls his history of the Church a narrative *περὶ τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς*, or *κατὰ Θεὸν, πολιτεύματος*, where Valesius, who takes the latter reading, renders or paraphrases, "sacræ cujusdam ac divinæ *reipublicæ*."

² Gal. iv. 26, R. V.

holds up a counter-attraction to base pleasures in the majestic fact of a Christian membership in that "one body" which, as he tells the Ephesians, is animated by the "one Spirit," and is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"; and which, as he here intimates, has the principle of its life in the unseen heavenly world, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. He would fortify Christian men against the lures of vices which look fair by turning upon them a light which will "convict" them of being foul: they will thus be shown up in their true colours, will, as he says strikingly, become "light," be luminous by means of that exposure: and the light which he employs is that which beams from the true Holy City. "You who think yourselves alone amid temptations to a degrading sensuality, who feel at times that you must yield and have done with it, lift up your eyes, and see yourselves encircled by a vast array of purifying and ennobling forces, which are, so to speak, at the disposal of all the subjects of the Kingdom of heaven, of all the members of the body of Christ. It exists, that kingdom, that sacred commonwealth, with the roots of its life in the throne of the ascended Redeemer: you belong to it, you have an interest in it; let that consciousness invigorate your resistance to attractions which would bind you down to earth when you ought to be looking heavenwards, as having your portion in the city of the living God."

"Our commonwealth is in the heavens."

The words are intended to do much for us, to exert a lifting, bracing, and morally quickening influence. The more precious they are in this respect, the more needful it is to guard them against some misconstructions which at different times and under various conditions have had a very misleading effect.

They do not, then, mean that we are to take no interest in any question of "secular" politics, or to treat the whole area of civil government, with all the social activities that are astir in it, as common or unclean. This line has sometimes been adopted, as if nothing short of it could secure the ascendancy of the spiritual over the temporal, the unseen over the seen. In a remarkable sermon for St. Matthew's day, a great preacher admitted that "selfishness might lead a man to neglect public concerns in which he was called to take his share," in "fulfilment of trusts committed to him for the good of others," yet deprecated as a "delusion" the talk about political "rights."¹ There was a touch of morbid feeling in this ; a "right" and a "trust" are not antithetical terms : the conduct of St. Paul, on more than one occasion, may show that it is sometimes a duty to assert rights. Our Lord's command to give Cæsar his due carries the principle of a diligent discharge of the obligations which civic rights involve. The Apostle is bold to apply the term "God's ministers" to the officers of a State whose function it is to uphold justice and punish crime ; and as "godliness

¹ Newman, "Sermons," ii. 352.

has promise of the life which now is," it is intimately concerned with efforts to make that life happier, to improve its conditions for the struggling poor, to promote a reign of beneficence and righteousness. The primitive Christians were often denounced as bad subjects of Rome, as indifferent or hostile to her interests: and one of the austere of their teachers met the charge by saying that they made a point of praying for the emperor, and freely held intercourse with their pagan neighbours in shop and market, farm and inn, and even served in the army; ¹ only when idolatry was involved in this or that act of social life did they, as a matter of loyalty to their Master, stand aloof and accept the consequences. If they could feel and act thus towards an empire which owned the duty of stamping out, as "illicit" in itself, the exercise of their religion, patriotism and civic fidelity should not be hard duties for Christians of a nation whose noblest representative was Alfred. For us may the day never come when the sons of the English Church shall forget that they are sons of the English race, or cease to identify themselves practically with the fortunes of this august and ancient realm. Only at one point must they draw a firm clear line: if ever the spirit of "the world," in St. John's sense, should attempt to absorb the spiritual order into the secular, or to override in the State's name the convictions of the instructed religious conscience, then, and only then, would they be

¹ Tertullian, "Apology," 30, 42.

bound to fall back on the great Apostolic maxim, "We must obey God rather than men."

Still less does the heavenly character of our sacred religious commonwealth allow us to ignore the spiritual importance of "external and visible Church order." In other words, we must not say, "Because the true city of God 'exists in heaven,' therefore the organization of Christian society on earth, however necessary for religious convenience, is machinery, so to speak, and nothing more; it has no direct relation with the action of Christ on human souls, and the only Church which has such relation is an invisible one, made up of souls individually united to Him by faith."¹ Now, first, there is not a single passage in the New Testament which describes the Church as "invisible." The phrase originated with foreign Reformers, and was an exaggeration and distortion of the obvious fact, that in all ages there have been members of the visible Church who have been in it, but not morally or vitally of it, whereas others have really entered into its spirit and been true to its idea. But the latter have not formed a Church by themselves; and "it is scarcely too much to say that all stress laid upon the invisible Church," so called, "tends to lower the demands of holiness and brotherhood, because it is a visible Church, such as can attract outsiders, which calls out the fruits of faith into active energy, supplies sympathy,"

¹ See above, p. 237; and cf. Pullan, "Lectures on Religion," p. 185 ff.

and therein that consciousness of brotherly co-operation which is strength.¹ "An invisible Church," as Bishop Moberly once said, "would be but a weak antagonist to so very visible a world;"² and such considerations illustrate the unearthly wisdom which expressed itself in that careful, gradual, methodical preparation for the foundation of a visible Church which occupied so large a part of our Lord's ministry. "His message was never given except in an organized form:" He deliberately enshrined His truth in an orderly society, and made His grace part of a corporate system.³ The phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," occurs some thirty times in the first Gospel, without reckoning such variant phrases as "the kingdom of God" or of "the Son of Man." Our Lord's Jewish hearers would undoubtedly understand by it something like a visible body, something

¹ See Dr. Lock in "Lux Mundi," p. 376.

² Cp. Gladstone, "Church Principles," etc., p. 93: "The promulgation of a religion hostile to the actual tendencies of human nature, and to the powers of the world," would "require that it should be embodied in a visible institution. There the faith might dwell as in a house, there recover and refresh itself, . . . there gather its energies," etc. On the moral perils of individualism, cf. *ib.*, p. 118: "If I individualize my religion, if, in modern language, I place the account only between God and my conscience, . . . I manifestly rid myself of a host of troublesome remembrances, whose admonitions I cannot disprove and will not obey," etc.

³ H. S. Holland, "Creed and Character," p. 57 (cf. *ib.*, pp. 87, 117); Gore, "The Mission of the Church," p. 8; Stanton, "The Place of Authority," etc., p. 103.

that had "consistency, government, continuity, solidity, coherence,"¹—an institution, in short, having definite form and solid structure. We find that this kingdom is to contain bad as well as good subjects, foolish virgins, slothful or worthless servants, men who not only break commandments, but teach others to break them too; tares among wheat, bad fish in the same net with the good,—in a word, stones of stumbling. The existence of cases of this kind is among the mysteries of the kingdom, which will rudely shock preconceived ideas. Again, the kingdom is described as a household in which some servants are set over others as dispensers of food; and custody of its keys is promised to the Apostle whose readiness as a spokesman makes him the fitting representative of his colleagues. The impression derived from these and similar passages in the Gospel records of our Lord's life and teaching is not abated by sayings in which the kingdom appears as a sphere of moral and spiritual well-being, for the poor in spirit, the childlike, the sufferers for righteousness' sake. This language naturally refers to the purpose or aim of the kingdom, as realized in those whose characters are leavened by its influences; as we ourselves, familiar with the idea of a visible Church, and accustomed to take it for granted, naturally speak of it as "a home for the lonely," and a school of faith and patience and love.

¹ Holland, "God's City," p. 163. Cf. Gladstone, "Church Principles," p. 100.

Is there, then, any warrant in Scripture for the distinction which in these days is often drawn between "the kingdom" of God, or of heaven, and "the Church"? There is this distinction, certainly, that the visible Church, as "militant here in earth," is but a part of the kingdom, is but its visible representative, just as it is the visible representative of the whole of that "body mystical" which extends so widely into the invisible world. But there is no kingdom of heaven on earth which contrasts with the Church or house of God; and such an imagined contrast appears to be expressly excluded by the memorable words which bind together the promise of "the keys of the kingdom" with the announcement of the intention of "building the Church."

It should be well-nigh needless to carry on this thought into the records of Apostolical Christianity; but we remember how the earliest converts "adhered steadfastly to the teaching and fellowship of the apostles," who thus formed the nucleus around which the Church grew, and in dependence on which it lived. And if we ask what was the mind of that great teacher of the Gentiles whom the Lord Himself afterwards invested with apostleship, who contended so earnestly against Jewish legalism, and in behalf of the liberty wherewith Christ had made men free, we shall find that he habitually contemplates the Church of the living God, or the house of God, as a "body," and that his use of that figure is utterly in-

capable of application to an "invisible" or unascertainable number of individual souls that could not, in any intelligible sense, be said to possess a corporate unity. According to all the evidence before us, it is simply not true that the earliest Christians were content to live as so many units, each of whom had by and for himself taken hold of Christ as Saviour, and that they formed a Church in this sense, independently of all outward organization, or that they constructed such an organization just as other men might combine for purposes of study, or social intercourse, or political effort. In the oft-quoted words of Archbishop Temple,¹ "throughout the teaching of the Apostles it is the Church that comes first and the members of it afterwards; men were not brought to Christ" one by one, "and then determined that they would live in a community," or "decided that it would be a great help to their religion that they should join one another in worship. . . . On the contrary, the Church takes its origin not in the will of man, but in the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sent forth His Apostles; . . . they were not organs of the congregation, they were ministers of the Lord Himself. . . . They came first, and the members came afterwards. . . . Men are called in; they do not come in, and make the Church by coming; they are called in to that which already exists." In a word, the visible Church is not a religious club any more than the ministry is an executive

¹ Sermon at the Consecration of Truro Cathedral.

committee, or the sacraments observances of human invention. It is not devised by men, but provided for them; and the truth of its Divine origination is what primarily accounts for St. Paul's description of the whole kingdom, of which it is a part, as existing in heaven, even as elsewhere he says that God "made us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places;" while it further involves the perpetual derivation of the Church's life from above, that is, from Christ as glorified. Strictly speaking, the spiritual "commonwealth" is an empire, for He is its sovereign, and all powers exercised within it are His powers exercised through it.

Two responsibilities, then, lie on those who, as baptized Christians, are members of the visible Church. First, they are bound to recognize its inherent spirituality, as part of a Divine plan for the reunion of human souls with God. Its forms must be valued for the spirit of which they are the vehicles; its ordinances, in Dr. Pusey's expressive phrase, are to be regarded as not substitutes for, but instruments of, the living and ever-present Christ. We ignore His intention, we do what in us lies to defeat His purpose, when we think of the episcopate, for instance, merely as a venerable polity, an ancient and effective form of government, instead of associating it with the "gift" which, as St. Paul says, He bestowed after He ascended on high, and seeing in it a historical link to those on whom He breathed, and whom He sent as He had been sent by the Father.

Unless we thus connect our Church system with the spiritual realities of grace, we are still, in a sense, under the law; we have not emerged from a virtually Judaical atmosphere.¹

And then the convictions which are summarized in the Apostle's sentence must produce in us a genuine desire and a systematized effort to respond morally to God's purpose in the institution of His kingdom. To talk much of "the Church," to emphasize a "Church tone," to insist on "Church principles," and to stop there,—what a self-contradiction!—what a self-condemnation! Whenever we think of the Church, or of our own position as her members, let us ask ourselves why she exists—for what end she was created and is sustained? Surely, to diffuse spiritual life, to carry on the work of Divine grace, to form and consolidate Christian character, "till we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man," or, as the Ordinal paraphrases, to "that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ" in which right belief and right conduct shall be one. Our corporate religion is to keep our personal religious life in good health and effective working order. Here then comes the question, "Is it doing so? If not, why not? If to some extent, might it not do so yet more? Could not our church-going, for instance, impart

¹ On the Roman tendency to lay a one-sided emphasis on "unity of government," and the Roman assumption that the visible Church as such must needs have a visible head with absolute power, see Gore "on the Ephesians," pp. 153-156.

more reality to our private prayers, our communions deepen our sense of Christ's perpetual nearness, our consciousness of belonging to a commonwealth that is in heaven let in somewhat more of heavenly light into that daily life where the world casts so broad a shadow?" In this way the chasm which so often yawns between the seen and the unseen will diminish, when we find their unifying principle in the Incarnate. Let Him interpret for us the complexities of a world in which creatures composed of soul and body are met by claims temporal and claims spiritual, that to eyes which just look, and do not gaze, will too often appear divergent; let us learn to see them "in Christ," and then each fact will fall into its place, will be luminous in its due proportion, as He will enable us to appraise it who, being and continuing to be very God, became for us, and still is, very man. Elements that seem antagonistic are reconciled when He touches them; the interests of earth are not annulled by being consecrated: the eternal world is felt to flow into the temporal; absorption in secularity is excluded, yet no countenance is given to a fanatical mysticism; and He whose ministry was marked by experiences so human in their homeliness now "occupies the whole sphere of human life, and permeates all its developments,"¹ in that, while reigning at the right hand of God, He is for us "all things and in all."

¹ Lightfoot on Col. iii. 12.

XXXI

The Thirteenth Centenary of the Coming of St. Augustine

(Oxford Cathedral, June 27, 1897)

1 Kings viii. 57, 58 (part): "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us, nor forsake us: that He may incline our hearts unto Him."

IT is nearly thirty years since one whose words, if any man's, meant thought, concluded a sermon,—the first of a remarkable series,—by affirming with solemn confidence, that "amid closing histories and falling institutions," two things would stand the shock which for so much else would be sheer overthrow. "There will remain," he said, "the Christian Creed and the Christian Church."¹ Since Dr. Mozley uttered this sentence, prophecies of a very opposite kind have become more voluble than ever. What do we think of them? Are we secretly overawed by them? This great religion of ours, with its majesty and its tenderness, its pathos and its awfulness, this "received," theological, sacramental, "supernatural" Christianity,—will

¹ Mozley, "Univ. Sermon," p. 27.

the rain and flood and storm of philosophies hostile, not merely to this or that point in it, but to the very principle or preconception which underlies it, involve it in the ruin of houses built upon sand? Our answer to this momentous question depends on one that goes yet further back: Do we really believe, with a moral and spiritual "fulness of assurance,"¹ that there is a living God, who is absolutely "master in His own house," who can speak as a Supreme Personality to men as persons, and in whose eyes the moral order transcends the physical? And if we believe in such a God, do we know Him as manifested in, as "interpreted" by, His Son, His Word, incarnate for our salvation?² Is our Christian belief something more than a "working theory," more even than an intellectual conviction? Is it an adhesion to Christ Himself, as to One whom we have found to have words of life eternal?³ If so, then our hope for Creed and Church may be called a steadfast anchor.⁴ No doubt, as St. Paul forewarns us, the "hope" that has Christ for its object must have "patience" for one of its elements;⁵ we must expect that belief will continue to meet with difficulties; but through them we shall look up to Him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and even for ever."⁶ And as with that faith in a Divine Christ which secures to us the significance of the central Figure of the Gospels, so

¹ 1 Thess. i. 5; Heb. x. 22.

² St. John vi. 68.

⁵ 1 Thess. i. 3.

² St. John i. 18.

⁴ Heb. vi. 19.

⁶ Heb. xiii. 8.

with that organized society or kingdom to which He has entrusted His grace and truth. The Church may often seem to be in a bad way—to be failing, losing ground, losing heart, losing spiritual energy, “letting go its first love,”¹ or drifting into a self-complacent lukewarmness; but still we shall know that it has a vitality in which is the potency of a thousand recoveries, and against which (the Lord Himself has said it) the gates of the kingdom of death shall not prevail.

Such hopes, we say, have their foundation deepest laid in that inward consciousness of Christ’s servants which is formed by a personal experience of the presence, the love, and the power of their Lord. They have heard Him for themselves, and they know.² But they can also fall back on many inspiring memories. Israel, of old, was a nation sustained by one mysterious hope. Yet the best Israelites had their moments of “infirmity,” when even He whose name was “I Am” seemed to “hide Himself” and “forget to be gracious”; and then what a comfort for them to “remember the years of the right hand of the Most High,” to dwell on what their fathers had told them of His wonderful works in the far-off past!³ And so it was easier to trust that He would be with them as He was with their fathers. And should not we, “the heirs of all the” Christian “ages,” be still more able so to look back as to look more

¹ Rev. ii. 4.

² St. John iv. 42.

³ Ps. xlv. 1, 24; lxxvii. 9, 10.

calmly and bravely forward? Not, of course, by dreaming that in this or that "golden age" the ideal of the Church was made actual; not by closing our eyes to the darker side of its history, to scandals, and saddening "surprises," and records of corruption, of superstition, or of worldliness, of divisions beginning in rifts and ending in chasms. All this we must look at, because facts cannot safely or honestly be ignored; but amid all that disappoints or that tries our faith we see sure tokens of a Presence still "in the boat," and therewith of that versatile persistent activity of grace, which so often raises up the man for the emergency, over-rules mistakes, brings good out of evil, enlists unlikely agents in its service, "transforms" the coarse lump by the hidden "stir" of the holy leaven,¹ and bids the dry bones stand up on their feet, instinct with the breath of that Spirit who is the Life-giver.²

It is to one such work of grace, in which all English Christians are specially interested, that our attention is invited to-day. May we not well thank God for having sent us, just thirteen hundred years ago, the first preacher of Christ to the English, the first bishop who gathered around him an English Church properly so called? Far be it from us to forget that older British Church, which had indeed existed for at least four centuries before the arrival of St. Augustine. But the onward sweep

¹ H. S. Holland, "God's City," p. 153.

² Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10.

of English conquest had for the most part driven its visible presence into the lands extending from the Solway into Cornwall : elsewhere the invaders had overthrown Christian altars, and set up the worship of those idols whose names still harmlessly adhere to five days in every English week. What could be done for the conversion of these strong-willed Saxons and Angles ? The native Christians partly could not—and, one must say it, partly would not—face that question ; the Frankish bishops, across the Channel, with less excuse put it by. But there was one man, living far off in the south of Europe, who could not put it by ; one man who, amid all his well-nigh overpowering solitudes, had been haunted for years by the fair sad faces of some poor Yorkshire boys in a Roman slave-market : it was Gregory, the greatest and one of the best of all the bishops of Rome. There is hardly even in Rome a spot more full of attraction for visitors from England than that slope of the Coelian Hill, where they can still read on a tablet in the vestibule of a church that “from this monastery came forth Augustine :” where he and his companions, forty in number, passed out with Gregory’s blessing from the quiet home of their conventual life, to undertake, as his agents, the task of evangelizing a race whose name had been proverbial for ferocity. We can hardly wonder at their subsequent misgivings, or their cautiously slow progress through France ; but their landing near Ramsgate in the May of 597 was followed by

results which might seem to rebuke their fears. Bede helps us to see them appearing before the Kentish King Ethelbert with a silver cross and a painting of the Saviour, and singing a solemn litany : and a later Saxon writer may not be far wrong when he professes to give the pith of Augustine's sermon—"He told how the gentle-hearted Saviour had by His own suffering redeemed this sinful earth."¹ Then we hear the king answering gravely, and in a royal spirit of fairness: he will not commit himself, but he promises them, at any rate, what they need for their support, and freedom of missionary action. And when they descend by St. Martin's hill into Canterbury, it is with a hymn used in Gaul on the Rogation days, and singularly in accordance with the sequence observed in our own daily service: confession comes first, and praise afterwards: "We beseech thee, O Lord, in Thy mercy, let Thine anger be turned away, for we have sinned:" and then, and not till then, bursts forth the Paschal Alleluia.²

What are we to say of our first Archbishop? It has for years been the fashion to disparage him, and to minimize the importance of his work. One need not be careful to answer those who think to dispose of him by calling him "the Monk": but he is often too summarily characterized as quite an inferior sort of person, altogether deficient in tact and in insight, dictatorial, petty-minded, and also practically ineffi-

¹ Cf. Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 11.

² Bede, i. 25.

cient. I venture to think that this estimate is not only ungracious, but one-sided and wanting in equity. He certainly did sometimes exhibit the defects of monastic training, although in his fruitless conference with Britons he could waive "many" points of ceremonial observance.¹ He is not by any means so grand or beautiful a figure as St. Columba or St. Aidan; and his short episcopate saw but three bishoprics founded, one of which soon fell in a pagan reaction. But he did four things, at any rate, which give him a place by himself among the religious "makers" of England.

First, he began the long process which made our people Christian. He opened the door, he took some steps on the path, he set the eventful example. It is a simple matter of dates. He came some thirty-six years before the arrival of the first of those saintly Irishmen who did so much for English Christianity;² and in this sense he may surely be called "our apostle," as Bede, who knew the whole story, and is in fact *the* authority about it, applies that title even to Gregory as having sent him:³ and an English Church council, soon after Bede's death, describes Augustine as "the first to bring us the knowledge of the faith."⁴

Secondly, when, as now,⁵ our thoughts are

¹ Bede, ii. 2.

² Fursey probably came into East Anglia two years before Aidan came into Northumbria, *i. e.* in 633.

³ Bede, ii. 1.

⁴ Council of Clovesho, can. 17.

⁵ At the "jubilee" of Queen Victoria's sixty years of reign.

fixed on the long tradition of English Christian kingship, let us remember that it was Augustine who gave it the start; that it was his teaching, enforced, as we are expressly told, by a life of single-hearted goodness, and already accepted by "some" of the Canterbury townsfolk, which first brought an English king to the feet of Christ—that king who also "learned" from Augustine that he must use no coercion in behalf of his newly-adopted creed.¹

Thirdly, Augustine did what he could to associate the beginnings of English Church life with European culture, and something like systematic education. He knew how to value the "many books" sent to him from Rome; and it has recently been said with obvious truth, that the school which was flourishing at Canterbury some thirty years after his death, and which grew, still later, into a famous college of religious and secular learning, was "probably due to" him as founder.²

Lastly, he left behind him one institution which, although for years its scope was limited, became ere long the consolidating, centralizing, and unifying principle of the English Church. For he was the first Archbishop of Canterbury; and the fact will be all the better appreciated when we think of that large assembly of Anglican prelates from all the ends of the earth, which is about to meet around his throne.³ We know, to be sure, that Roman voices ask

¹ Bede, i. 26.

² Plummer on Bede, iii. 18.

³ The "Lambeth Conference" of 1897.

“what portion” we can have in Augustine, who disclaim the authority of the See by which he was sent. They tell us that we lost all true ecclesiastical continuity when we ceased to be subject to that See; and that therefore our Church is not the old Church of England, and our Primate’s chair is not St. Augustine’s own. But this just begs the very question between the Anglican and Roman Churches. Continuity, of course, is not preserved by the mere possession of cathedrals and bishoprics, and is certainly lost if a Church parts with what is essential to its sacred constitution; but our contention is that the Papacy is not a part of the constitution of Christ’s kingdom, and therefore that a Church which, after long experience of its yoke, shook it off as not of His fashioning, may be spiritually as well as legally “continuous,” provided that with the primitive order it retains the primitive faith and means of grace.

It is in thankful remembrance of what we owe to Augustine’s ministry that we welcome the opportunity of bearing some little part in the efforts now made by the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury for the “restoration,” in a worthy sense, of their magnificent primatial cathedral. This humbler minster of ours has in its title a special relation to “Christ Church, Canterbury,” and therein, one may add, to the original Christ Church, “the Lateran basilica of the Saviour,” the proper diocesan cathedral of Rome. To contribute something to the good work at Canterbury will not only help us to realize the unity of

our chief ecclesiastical province, but, far better, will quicken our sense of the mercies which, in 597, began to be poured out on English souls.

In the words of a collect which was used last Whitsun-eve in St. Paul's Cathedral, let us praise that God "who, through the preaching of His blessed servant Augustine, did first bring the English race out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of Himself and of His Son." And while, as is very meet and right, we thus thank Him, let us beg Him still to be with us, as He was with our fathers; still, by the might of His grace, to incline our hearts, minds, and wills, our whole being, to His service; and still to enable us to hold fast, in thought and in life, the faith which Augustine taught to his Kentish converts, and which concentrates itself on the Person of an adorable Redeemer.¹

¹ When Gregory says ("Epist." vi. 58, 59) that the "race of Angles" had desired to become Christian before he resolved to send Augustine, he must be referring to an exaggerated rumour about the influence exercised in Kent by Bishop Liudhard, Bertha's chaplain. Christian teaching, when heard from Augustine's lips, was "new" to Ethelbert; and Gregory blames Bertha for not having tried to convert him. ("Epist." xi. 29.)

Addresses to Ordinands

I.—Ordination in Unquiet Times

TIMES in which the old order is changing are always full-fraught with vivid interest for those who have eyes to see. It is indeed wonderful, or perhaps, if one thinks a little of the self-blinding capacities of human nature, it is *not* so wonderful, that the "discernment," the due appreciation, of the "signs" of a critical moment should be so rare a faculty among men who move about in the world. What is seems often to have a vested right to continue: it is so natural, and so agreeable, to assume that "to-morrow will be as this day, and much more abundant;" to say in effect, "There are clouds here and there, but they are sure to disperse, and we shall have fine weather after all; why should we excite ourselves about dangers which most probably will prove unsubstantial?" And so the Divine maxim is travestied and perverted: because we are forbidden to be "solicitous about the morrow," we dispense ourselves from the

duty of "redeeming the time," of buying up or securing the brief and precious opportunity, of understanding the day of our visitation. Bishop Butler might seem to be commenting on such texts when he enlarges, again and again, on the real "immorality" which may be involved in simple inattention, and on the miseries which may result from it.¹ And this inattention is all the more culpable as the forewarnings of a crisis become more audible; and if persisted in, it approaches more and more nearly to that fatal heedlessness which "knew not until the flood came," and which, we are assured, will be reproduced in the future "days of the Son of Man."

The years that immediately preceded the great English Civil War must have fully tested the power of discernment in young men who presented themselves for admission into the Anglican ministry. Many, no doubt, put aside misgivings, if misgivings they ever had, by assuming that the King's government was as strong as ever, and that the Primate—who, however, as we know, had even in 1626 foreseen "a cloud threatening the Church of England"—would still be able to hold Puritanism in check. But others could not so easily delude themselves; and special reference may be made to one who lived to become a great personage, and under royal and archiepiscopal urgency to superadd to the headship of Christ Church the duties of the bishopric of Oxford. The inscription on the

¹ See above, p. 145.

monument of Bishop Fell records significantly that he sought for and received the diaconate *vacillante ecclesiâ*, and the presbyterate *penitus eversâ*; and his spiritual loyalty was evinced by his association with two others like-minded in keeping up the regular Sunday services for a small congregation of Oxford churchmen when nothing but the connivance of Puritan authorities could have warded off the penalties of Puritan law.

Is it germane to our purpose, you may ask, to go back to an old story of the crash of Episcopacy as administered by Laud, and of kingship as represented in Charles I.? Is the English Church now "tottering"? is its "overthrow" within measurable distance? Is not "disestablishment," to all appearance, less "in the air" than a few years ago? It may be answered that a pessimistic view of English Church prospects is not the only mistake to be avoided; that we have reason enough—quite apart from such apprehensions as "betray the succours that reason offereth"—to store our memory with such examples of thoughtful steadfastness and calm faith,—of what the Apostle calls "self-control,"—under conditions of grave character, which the history of our predecessors can furnish.

For *our* conditions are grave; the outlook is in various directions threatening; we see, if we open our eyes, not a little that puts a facile optimism to rebuke. To take only one or two points in the foreground of the prospect: it has

become a commonplace to say that young men who now take Holy Orders can no longer reckon on quiet lives like those of the old-time clergy ; they may see strange things before their ministry is half ended. If they go into towns, they are instantly confronted by perplexing social problems, and are like to be absorbed by an amount of quasi-secular work which it would better become laymen to take off their hands. If they go into the country, they see that the Church hardly "stands where it did" : the relation of the rural labourer to the parson is not what it was ; as it has been pointedly observed, his "social and personal position," his "prescriptive immemorial authority," his "official dignity as recognized head of the parish, have been lowered by recent legislation ;" the clerical Arcadia has lost much of its antique charm. On all sides the ascendancy of "establishment" is giving way ; the designation of the English Church as "national," which some of her "defenders" reiterate as if it represented the most sacred and constraining of her claims—in forgetfulness, apparently, of the Erastian applications to which it lends itself,—must be acknowledged by all who look at facts to require, at least, very considerable deductions. In the field of education the Church has to fight for every inch of the ground ; parents, themselves Church people by profession, exhibit sometimes a blank indifference, and sometimes even a practical aversion, to the inculcation of distinctive Church doctrines in schools where their children are

being educated; they placidly acquiesce in the "question-begging" description of those doctrines as "sectarian"; and the "undenominational" idea of religious teaching, incompatible as it is with any serious belief in "a real body of religious truth,"¹—being an attempt, as the late Dean Vaughan expressed it, to "form a *tertium quid* or a *decimum quid*" out of the various religious beliefs of different bodies, and thereby to construct a new "residuary" religion,—does evidently commend itself to the popular English mind. It suits the conditions of the Board School system; and many Nonconformists, who are themselves "orthodox" on the cardinal point of Trinitarian belief, have deemed themselves logically bound by "the compromise of 1870," as they understand it, to resist the intrusion of Trinitarian teaching into Board School "religious lessons,"—a contention which too evidently had a deeper motive in dislike of "dogma" and hatred of "sacerdotalism." And here indeed we touch the very edge of the chasm which parts the Anglican position from the Nonconformist; a profound antagonism between two conceptions of Church, sacraments, and ministry, and therefore of Christ's own plan in the formation and administration of

¹ Carnegie, "Some Principles of Religious Education," p. 79. He adds that if there is such a body of truth, forming a whole, then "the principle of undenominationalism is unscientific and unsound; it becomes at once a logical absurdity, and is bound, sooner or later, to prove itself a practical absurdity as well," etc.

His kingdom. To say that we are separated from Nonconformists on such matters as Church polity or forms of worship is to ignore facts which break in rudely on dreams of "home reunion," and which no personal kindliness on the part of individual Nonconformists, such as *we* should be ever ready to welcome and to reciprocate, can allow us to leave out of the reckoning. Yet even here something may be done by patient and considerate efforts to show *why* we value the ordinances; one great Nonconformist theologian at any rate did frankly acknowledge that High Churchmen "were contending for the sacredness and efficacy of the institutions by which they believed that the eternal life of God was made the actual possession of mankind;"¹ that they did, in fact, look through these supposed media to Christ as the one source of grace and salvation. Men who can make this acknowledgment will be at one with us, so to speak, on the major premiss, although they will deny our minor; and until they can accept it the gap is *not* bridged; there is no use in pretending that we can cross it.

We can as little overlook the existence of serious controversies within our own body: at times they seem to touch on questions of

¹ Dale, "Fellowship with Christ," p. 347. He had said just before, "For them the sacraments, when duly administered, are the appointed means by which the grace of God first originates and then sustains the divine life in man. It is this which in their judgment makes the sacramental and sacerdotal controversy so critical, so awful," etc.

primary moment, which go back to the root-question, What think ye of Christ, of His Person and of His authority? and the optimistic language which we sometimes hear in connexion with Church Congresses, as to the "melting away" of internal divergencies of opinion, requires to be soberly tested by facts. But let us put this class of troubles aside for the present: the gravest evil of all is unquestionably the prevalent indifference to all religion, either as incapable of being any longer maintained in the face of science and of criticism, or as actually "superfluous" for the "main objects of life,"¹ whether moral or social. It is at least as true as some twenty years back, that "the religion of Christ as a whole, nay, even the pallid scheme of theism, is assailed with a sweep and vehemence of hostility greater probably than at any former period."² Pre-assumptions are made and adopted which "omit God and the things of God" from the sphere of what is knowable:³ or an intensified sense of the mass of evil and misery in the world gives bitter emphasis to the most cardinal of all negations, and passionate energy to an organized propaganda of unbelief. And many others who could not enter into

¹ See Carnegie, "Some Principles," etc., p. xviii.

² Gladstone, "Gleanings," vi. 163. In 1896 he wrote, "The one controversy which, according to my deep conviction, overshadows, and in the last resort absorbs, all others is the controversy between faith and unbelief." *Ib.* viii. 411.

³ H. S. Holland, "Pleas and Claims for Christ," p. 27.

speculative difficulties may take up stock objections,—not seldom directed in fact against the Calvinistic perversion of Christianity,—but their real ground for rejecting religion is that they do not *want* it: their spiritual perceptions, especially the consciousness of sin, have been dulled by disuse under the pressure of secular interests; in effect, they repeat the old question, “What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?” They do not see what religion would do for them, while they are pretty sure that it would interfere with them; therefore they live as if it were demonstrably untrue.

Much more might be said on the things which are against us. But this is fully enough to remind you that your lot will be cast amid troublous times. It is the Lord’s will, and as such you will accept it: you may seem to hear Him asking whether you can “drink,” in some measure, of His “cup,” and be “baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with;” if so, you will not give quite so curt and confident an answer as did those two brothers who

“freely cast their lot
With David’s royal Son;”¹

you will rather say, “Lord, make me able.” If the circumstances are in many ways adverse, yet, be sure of it, there are “effectual doors open.” It may be all the better for you that you do not receive Holy Orders in days which,

¹ “Lyra Apostolica,” p. 31.

by their mere quietness and sunshine, might relax a clergyman's tone into a respectable secularity, and make his ministrations first languid and then heartless. What our forefathers, in a "tepid age," called "the clerical profession" cannot now be adopted by way of a sound investment, as securing a comfortable provision, and an easy task under the shelter of indisputable privilege. In other times the penetrating words of the Ordination Gospel might easily fall on ears unready to take in their full significance: if the idea of vocation had not been duly grasped, it would be almost a matter of course to put a commonplace gloss on language inconveniently solemn. But it will not be so with you; the imagery of girded loins, and burning lamps, and watchful out-looking faces, will not speak to you in vain; it will but deepen impressions of long standing, and quicken a true resolve to give yourselves up utterly to Christ. For there is the heart of the whole matter. "Ye see your calling, brethren:" you are to be officers of His kingdom, stewards of His household, pastors of His flock, in the midst of this English people. A serious task in any case, and now more serious than ever, when so many of them are prejudiced, or suspicious, or hostile; when your claim will be repeatedly and peremptorily challenged; when your motives and beliefs will be strangely misunderstood; when the work before you will seem so immense that no strength can suffice to carry it through. Well,

but you have, at present, just one thing to do ; to put yourselves absolutely into the hands of your Master and King, the "Pastor of pastors" and the "Priest of priests." You have taken your part as among His servants : whoever else may doubt Him, or "walk no more with Him," or think that His name has lost whatever beneficial power it once possessed, you are ready to confess Him before men by accepting the commission of His ministers. You do not "stumble at the corner-stone" ; you believe that your moral and spiritual nature bears witness to a living God, that a revelation from such a God is antecedently probable, and that it has been given in the Person of His Son as Incarnate. You know that there are difficulties in the pathway of faith, but you are well assured that the difficulties of unbelief are far more formidable, and you *can trust Jesus Christ*. Begin your new life, then, at His feet. Do not look too far forward, nor brood on possibilities of failure in this or that part of your work, and of the despondency that is apt to wait on failure, and to cut the nerves of hopeful effort. Give yourselves to Him who asks now for your single-hearted self-presentation ; rely on Him to lead you on, step after step ; take each trouble or perplexity, or apparent hindrance, as it comes, and say the *Veni Creator* before dealing with it ; keep your own memoranda alike of hindrances and of reliefs ; and while you pray for guidance, for strength, and for comfort, forget not to pray always for

that clear intention and loyal devotion which are the "fiery salt"¹ of acceptable service. He who "believes," in this vital sense, will not need to "make haste," as if the spirit which he had received were a spirit of tremulous apprehension: he will know whose servant and instrument he is, and whose arm can carry him through fire or water; for he will know, adore, and serve the Eternal Christ.

¹ St. Mark ix. 49.

NOTE.—It may be thought inopportune to suggest caution in the use of the familiar phrase "National Church." Yet advantage is often taken of the claim thus implied to represent the Church as the nation's creature, to detach the rights of Church membership from its spiritual obligations, and to say in effect, "If you are the nation's Church, you must be content to reflect, from time to time, the nation's general religious belief: your doctrine must be flexible and, so to speak, *unformulated*." See some weighty words in Dean Church's "Letters," p. 186.

XXXIII

II.—Some Tendencies in Modern Clerical Life

It was a great thing to be said, and to be said with conspicuous truth of one who was justly called the wisest Churchman of his time, that "of all the elder race he was the one who most intimately followed on with the new movements and the fresh temper—who felt what was going forward, believed in its worth, took it seriously, so that the younger men could come to him with their vague and crude aspirations," and be "sure of a judgment that" would "view their case from inside."¹ Assuredly the mere *laudator temporis acti* is, as such, prematurely and wilfully senile; he can "bring forth" no more "fruit." Those who were young in a comparatively quiet time, and who live on into a period that is at least transitional, perhaps even revolutionary, must school themselves not to be impatient amid the stir that intrudes on

¹ H. S. Holland, in "Life and Letters of Dean Church," p. 227.

their tranquillity, and the confusion that seems to be making straight for chaos. If the stream of life runs more rapidly and impetuously, still the "voice of the Lord is upon many waters;"¹ if "the earth is moved exceedingly," or even "turned upside down," it is because "the Lord hath spoken this word;"² the temper that simply bans what is strange and distasteful, as if it could not be the symbol of some new and real want, is a temper not only less than hopeful towards man, but less than dutiful towards God, who, in the well-known words of the poet, may be but "fulfilling Himself" in this "change of the old order."³ It must be ill for any of us to encounter the piercing question, "How is it that ye know not how to estimate this critical time?"⁴

And yet, as every age has its capacities and its tasks, it will also have its limitations, and its grave possibilities of failure. If we are not to idolize the past, neither must we ignore drawbacks in the present which create anxieties as to the future. God has willed that this "time" should be turbid and unrestful; and such characteristics have their own dangers, as real as those of days which were calmer. Stagnation was then the thing to be afraid of; now it is "a wide breaking-in of waters"⁵ that may sweep away fair seed-plots of healthy spiritual growth. Let us look for a brief space at one

¹ Ps. xxix. 3.

² Isa. xxiv. 1, 3, 20.

³ Tennyson, "The Passing of Arthur."

⁴ St. Luke xii. 56.

⁵ Job xxx. 14.

or two of the tendencies of the age—which exist and operate because it is what it is—so far as they affect the tone, the thought, the conduct of the younger English clergy.

1. It is proverbially an age that insists on "quick results"; and this kind of eagerness is curiously visible in the prevalent, or at least the popular disposition to simplify Christian doctrine. Every one knows that there are parts of the Christian scheme which are hard to adjust and correlate with each other. We see lines going on and on, and still continuing parallel; we strain our eyes to discern a meeting point, but if there is one it is shrouded in mist. Each line represents an aspect of truth, which, in Mozley's phrase, may be called "indistinct" and "incompletely revealed," except (truly a large exception) for the purposes of "practical religion."¹ Of two students or thinkers, A will prefer this line, and B that; they will respectively be tempted to avert their minds from the one which they find less interesting; and this for two reasons—it saves trouble, and it looks logical. A single idea seems so lucid, so round, so sufficient; it frets us to have to balance and check it by another; during that process, which may be long and difficult, our system lacks compactness, neatness, and finish; and then our impatience assumes the garb of a zeal for argumentative consistency. The great writer just quoted, in a graphic and

¹ Mozley, "Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination," p. 29.

impressive context, goes through a list of the great heresies, and says that the watchword of each was, "Be logical";¹ that this "logicalness" was purchased by the carrying out of one idea to its supposed consequences, in sheer disregard of another which ought to have been co-ordinated with it. Here, truly, was the "short cut" which proved to be the "long way round"; an appearance of straightforwardness and "simplicity" with the reality of distortion and one-sidedness, of what the "Lyra Apostolica" calls a "halving" of Gospel truth. Instances are as rife in modern Church history as in ancient; Lutheranism adopted, as its *articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiæ*, a peculiar interpretation of the Apostle's words about justifying faith, which virtually resolved it into a mental self-assurance. Not a few English Churchmen have dwelt on what they called "the simple Gospel of a free salvation," as if it comprised the entire religion of the New Testament; and perhaps we shall not misjudge the average Englishman's aversion to what he terms "sacerdotalism," if we suppose that to a large extent it means a disposition to exclude from his Christianity whatever might impair his individual "independence," to keep it, so to speak, in a convenient parcel which will go easily into his own hands. But is not Roman teaching just as full of injurious "simplifi-

¹ Mozley on "Theory of Development," p. 42. The passage has been called "classical."—Powell, "Principle of the Incarnation," p. 14.

cations"? It swells out the element of authority until freedom is nowhere;¹ it reduces the function of the laity—the baptized, confirmed, and communicant body of the Church—to a pure submissiveness which would perpetuate spiritual childhood; it concentrates all Church power into mere devolution from a single Italian prelate; and for the reasonable faith which should give a hearing to divers witnesses, it substitutes "the easier exercise of ignoring all but one."² Romanists frequently—and members of Protestant sects sometimes—are pleased to amuse themselves on the score of "Anglican incoherence," as if our system were really a mere hash of opposite principles, as if we were always trying to walk on two roads at once. They "laugh," perhaps, before they have "won." Truth is, in a real sense, complex, as life is;³ we must take account of it, not piecemeal, but, as far as we can, wholly; this will give us trouble, will task our patience, will often humble us by the experience of mistake; the results may, in Bishop Butler's phrase, come far short of intellectual "satisfaction";⁴ but if we are earnest in our resolve not to be hurried—not provoked to drop this or that piece of truth because it gives us so much to carry—if we will bear with knots and tangles, and questions but partially soluble, and "that homely

¹ Gladstone, "Gleanings," iii. 270.

² Mahan's Works, iii. 71 ("The Exercise of Faith").

³ See Dean Paget in "Lux Mundi," p. 405 ff.

⁴ "Analogy," part ii. c. 8.

kind of certainty " ¹ which is, in effect, sufficient under the inevitable condition of "not walking by sight," we shall have our compensation in a deepened perception of the majesty, the vastness, the infinity of a religion that comes down from "the Father of" all "the lights," and interprets for us the Incarnation of His own co-essential Son.

2. Let us take one other point, itself not less akin to the "time-spirit" in one of its most attractive manifestations. All around us (to revert to a former simile) are not only rushing waters, but meeting waters as well. Communication, in all forms, has become easy: men are saying,—but not, as of old, in the way of hostile challenge,—“Come, let us look one another in the face.” ² They come, they look, they speak, they wish to be friends: it is a commonplace to say that the age is longing for more unity; and then comes the question, “What of the barriers which now divide us?” They seem, to many minds, artificial, conventional, worse than needless; there is an impulse to pull them down and cast them away. “Let us shake hands all around; let us make concessions to the utmost; let us sacrifice this or that idea, or practice, or institution, in order to turn opponents into allies.” The temper which thus speaks is most winning, most amiable and genial; but its very richness of luxuriant sympathy may need (though it seems a hard saying) to be pruned, corrected,

¹ Salmon, “Infallibility of the Church,” p. 73.

² 2 Kings xiv. 8.

kept in order. One who understands this state of things has said, "We are too sensitive, too appreciative all round, to be effective."¹ Concession, by all means, when no principle forbids: but that is precisely the pinch of the matter. *Ecce quam bonum*—yes, but the unity to which "the Lord has promised His blessing"² is a unity in truth. May one indicate, here and there, some ground which in this respect "craves wary walking"?

It is pleaded, and reasonably pleaded, that we must try to speak God's word not in terms that have become archaic, but so as that the men of our day shall understand;³ and that, if advance in knowledge has shown that any position is really untenable, we should, for truth's sake, abandon it. But surely we must take care to ascertain what has been thus disproved and what has not;—whether this or that ancient phrase or argument or interpretation may not still live and be significant, if we take pains to clear it of misconstruction. For instance, the attempt to disarm some outside critics by adopting, with more or less of reserve, a foreign Protestant theory of (so called) "Kenosis," will be found more or less to imperil, first the doctrine of the Holy Incarnation, and finally the true idea of God. For the Incarnation implies that our Lord continued "perfect God" after He had become "perfect

¹ H. S. Holland, in "Good Will" for Nov. 1896.

² Ps. cxxxiii. 4.

³ Père Gratry, quoted in preface to "Lux Mundi."

man"; that while accepting limitations in the human sphere, He remained unlimited outside it. But if He, being confessedly a Divine person, did absolutely, and "as touching His Godhead," resign during His earthly course any of his Divine perfections, He had so much less of Divine life and activity, and therefore was so much less perfectly God. But first, if He was not fully God, as well as fully man, when He gave Himself up for us, it can no longer be said that His divinity gave a transcendent value to His human self-oblation; and next, there can be no more or less in real divinity, and the notion that One who is really God can lay aside this or that Divine attribute as a man puts off part of his clothing offends against the vital principle of the Divine *simplicitas*, according to which what we call God's "attributes are not so many qualities of His essence, but are all one and the self-same *He*, as He is contemplated by His creatures in various aspects and relations."¹

¹ Newman, "Serm.," vi. 349; cp. S. Tho. Sum., i. q. 13, a. 4, 5. Kenoticism may indeed be described as a solvent of faith in more directions than one. It is astonishing, too, to observe how, under its strange attractions, the accepted rules of interpretation are neglected; how much is built up on a single phrase, the right rendering of which is matter of dispute; what consequences are deduced from the literal rendering, in disregard of the context. Is it, after all, so certain that the literal rendering of the verb *κενόω* must be adopted in Phil. ii. 7, when no one would adopt it in Rom. iv. 14; 1 Cor. i. 17; ix. 15? In those texts it represents a disparagement, in men's eyes, of a principle or of a reputation; why not here? St. Paul is, in effect, arguing that Christ did

Again, it is not difficult to forget, with regard to Old Testament criticism, that below all questions of date and authorship lies the question, whether we are to approach the Jewish Scriptures with a naturalistic presupposition or not? Once more, in their commendable aversion for a corrupt form of "sacerdotalism," their brotherly eagerness to acknowledge a "representative" character in the Christian ministry in its relation to "the whole body of the Church," clergymen sometimes hastily infer that ministerial power is simply a delegation from that body, as when a society appoints a committee and invests it with certain functions:¹ and then they naturally adopt—on the authority, it must

not do A, but did do B, with the result C; or, to put it otherwise, that instead of doing A, He did C in consequence of having done B. By not insisting on an unqualified retention of Divine co-equality, but, on the contrary, becoming man among men, Christ willed to appear as *not* thus co-equal: He made Himself inferior, or of no account (the second of two alternative renderings given by Liddell and Scott, *sub v.*); He accepted a lowering of His dignity, such lowering being necessarily involved in His "taking the form of a servant," etc. It is admitted that the scope of "He humbled Himself" in ver. 8 is measured by the logical requirement of His "becoming obedient up to the point of death, and that the death of the cross." By parity of reasoning, the phrase *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε* must mean just as much as is required by His assumption of manhood,—no less, but no more. See above, pp. 218, 248.

¹ This is a complete *non sequitur*; the eyes are an organ provided *for* the human body, and as such "represent" it in the exercise of its faculty of sight: see Moberly, "Ministerial Priesthood," p. 69 ff.

be owned, of a very eminent commentator—that interpretation of the Easter-night commission, recorded in St. John's twentieth chapter, which supposes it to be addressed to the "ten" not as apostles, but as believers, and so to the whole Christian people. Of course this view cuts right at the root of the idea of "apostolic succession," and of all that is involved in that idea. But looking at it exegetically, one seems to see (1) that the words of this commission belong not to that class of our Lord's sayings which are "spoken even to all," but to that other class which must be associated with His prolonged special training of the twelve for the work of apostleship;¹ (2) that thus they are in line with the words in His great intercession, "As Thou didst send Me forth,—even so did I send them forth," and that they similarly assign to the mission a truly awful plenitude of significance; (3) that the view in question is, to say the least, out of keeping with so cardinal a text as that in which Christ announces His intention to set over His household in general a permanent body of stewards;² and (4) that it supposes the apostles, so called, to have been on that most solemn occasion reduced to the position of "lay"

¹ Canon Holland has described this process with characteristic wealth of illustration, in "Creed and Character," pp. 55-63. The sum of what he there says might be found in F. D. Maurice's dictum—"If we called the four Gospels 'the Institution of a Christian ministry,' we might not go very far wrong."—"Kingdom of Christ," ii. 148.

² St. Luke xii. 42. Cp. St. Matt. xxiv. 45.

believers,¹ all manner of spiritual authority having been lodged in the collective apostolate of the "whole body," from which, therefore, the "apostles" would have to take out a new commission for any ministerial work : whereas the Acts and Epistles exhibit them as from the very outset supreme in the Church, describe the ministry as a Divine institution or "gift," and never once even indirectly suggest the notion that its powers were derived from the "body," — a notion, in fact, which is disposed of by the habitual language and action of St. Paul.²

There is, we know, a not unpleasing sensation of "large-heartedness" in conceding this or that point by way of not appearing exclusive. But after all, my brothers, we are trustees, and not masters, of truth which has come to us as revealed ; we are sacredly bound to be most heedful that our language is, as far as it goes, correspondent to that truth, and not to something else ; we have to speak God's words, "whether men will hear or will forbear ;" and in our ministry as "servants, not of men, but of Christ," we have no commission to "please"

¹ That other believers were present is clear from St. Luke xxiv. 33. But this does not prove that they were included in the commission : St. Luke describes the beatitudes as addressed to the "disciples" in the hearing of many others (vi. 17-20). St. John, we should observe, likes to speak of apostles as "disciples."

² 1 Cor. iv. 3 ; 2 Cor. v. 18 ; xii. 19 ; Gal. i. 1, 10 ; Eph. iv. 11. Was St. Paul more fully a minister "of Christ" than St. Peter or St. John ? The theory in question implies this. See also 1 Tim. i. 18 ; Tit. ii. 15.

them, except as "seeking their profit, that they may be saved."¹

Once again, this uncontrolled sympathy may range abroad in the social area. A generous passion of pity for the toiling and suffering "masses" impels priests working among them to become, as it were, politicians in their interest, or even to hope too much from schemes of social reconstruction. Most true it is that care for temporal needs has often brought success to spiritual work, while such work has been hindered by conditions which prevent life from being, in a worthy sense, human. Yet still there is a temptation, amid the enthusiasm of philanthropic effort, to forget that the Church's primary duty is to souls, and to put the secondary work too far forward because it raises no awkward questions about doctrine, Church-going, or sacraments; to say to oneself in effect, "These men would not accept Christ as He is known within the Church, but we might 'economically' present Him as a social or political Emancipator; they do not care about a kingdom of heaven as associated with Christian supernaturalism, but we might offer it as a future ameliorated state of natural or civil society." And is there, then, no risk in such a venture? May it not turn out to be a repetition, in modern form, of the Jewish degradation of the Messiahship? Is it not rash to assume that a secular ideal can, for the average man, be refined into

¹ Gal. i. 10; 1 Cor. x. 33.

a spiritual? that those who begin by patronizing Jesus as the friend of "workers" will easily be led upward to the worship of the Redeemer and Lord of souls? Is not the English mind, in all classes, only too prone to think nature sufficient, and grace superfluous? Moreover, one does occasionally see that the fervid wish to be "in touch with the people" has a questionable effect on some who make a great point of using "Catholic" phrases while they cast aside the self-restraint, perhaps even the reverence, in expression, which ought to be instinctive with "Catholics," and, not over gracefully, affect lay fashions, as if in fear that Demos may think them still too clerical for his service. On the whole, we are in presence of a possibility which bodes ill for the tone of our younger High Churchmen, whose predecessors were taught to beware of off-hand speech on great subjects, and had a serious dread of the danger inseparable from "strong words,"¹ and still more, of the terrible subtle force of secularizing influences. It is a possibility which forms a drawback to the advantages which the cause of the Church has gained by becoming (so far as it has become) popular. We cannot ignore the "seamy side" of that situation. Besides the point just now referred to, there is a tendency to accept programmes of Church-reform which draw their ideals and aims from popular government,—which practically aim at reconstituting the Kingdom of Christ

¹ Church, "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 256.

on a democratic principle foreign to its original character, according to which the authority of its officers is derived from above and not from below;¹ and yet further, the profession of absolute trust in "the heart of the people" is scarcely compatible with a recognition of that taint and twist and warp in human nature which forbids us Christians to idealize it.

Considerations like these may sound chilling, but they may prove sobering; and soberness is imperatively needed, when prospects full of hope seem to call for our active sympathy. Let us hope,—but let us remember that some disappointment is part of that law of "vanity" to which even believers in Christ are subjected; let us keep our hopes within reason, and seek, when we have to act, for the precious gift of a right judgment; let us be ever on the watch against the temptation to "throw off, as a shackle and a burden, the office of witnessing to" that "Divine truth"² which cannot be revised to suit the changeable fancies of men. There is not only point but solid comfort in the terse irony of an eloquent Archbishop: "The Church has not always failed in her mission when she has failed to attract and conciliate:"³ for even Christ Himself, in His earthly ministry, was misunderstood, and, on the whole, rejected even by His own "people," among whom and for whom He laboured, and whose "voice" was

¹ Gore, "The Ministry," pp. 71, 74, 271.

² Mozley, "Paroch. Sermon," p. 94.

³ Magee, "The Gospel and the Age," p. 189.

finally heard clamouring for His death. Let us always endeavour to "love in truth," and to "speak truth in love"; and while our hearts go forth to all the needs of our brethren, let us aim at this one supreme success,—to be approved as "faithful" by the Lord who is "theirs and ours."

NOTE.—In a preceding reference to the "Kenotic" controversy, several points were necessarily passed over: *e. g.* as to 2 Cor. viii. 9, wherein did Christ "become poor"? Surely in that wherein we hope to be "made rich" through His self-impoverishment; and *that* is the condition of heavenly glory. To become man was, so far, to descend from this glory; but it involved no quasi-Apollinarian "humanizing" of Divine attributes, no suspension of His Divine consciousness, or of any Divine energy *quoad* His Godhead. The co-existence of the "two natures" involved mutual relations without any interfusion: see *e. g.* such texts as St. John v. 36 *with* such as St. John ii. 11. Even now, in praying to Christ, we appeal at once to His Divine love and to His human sympathy.

THE END

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